

W. H. Cummings
A *Feb'y 1887*

DISCOURSE

OF

FREE-THINKING,

Occasion'd by

The Rise and Growth of a Sect
call'd FREE-THINKERS.

Mundum tradidit disputationi eorum. *Eccl.* 3. 11. Vulg.

Unusquisque suo sensu abundet. *Rom.* 14. 5. Ib.

Nil tam temerarium, tamque indignum sapientis gravitate atque constantiâ, quam, quod non satis exploratè perceptum sit & cognitum sine ulla dubitatione defendere. *Cic. de Nat. Deor.* l. 1.

Who shall be judg of what may be freely examin'd and what not? where liberty may be us'd; and where it may not? what remedy shall we prescribe to this in general? Can there be a better than from that liberty it self which is complain'd of?

Characteristicks, vol. 1. p. 10.



L O N D O N,

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- p. 19. l. 8. for *latter*, read second.
- p. 24. l. 1. for *Reeverend*, read Reverend.
- p. 26. l. 23. for *truthly*, read truth ly.
- p. 80. l. 14. for *in forms*, read informs.
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- p. 127. l. 25. for *numercial*, read numerical.



A DISCOURSE
OF
FREE-THINKING
IN A LETTER
TO

* * * * * Esquire.

S I R,



Apologies for *self-evident truths* can never have any effect on those who have so little sense as to deny them. They are the foundation of all reasoning, and the only just bottom on which men can proceed in convincing one another of the *truth*: and by consequence whoever is capable of denying them, is not in a condition to be inform'd. Mere ignorant men, or men destitute of those *principles of knowledge*, may perhaps be capable of information: their ignorance does not exclude them from assenting to a *self-evident truth* when they first hear it, nor from admitting any consequences deducible from it. But men who deny what is *self-evident*, are not
A only

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only destitute of the *principles of knowledg*, but must in virtue of such their denial have *principles* inconsistent with the *principles of knowledg*, and consistent with the *greatest absurdities*. And under that distemper'd state of mind, it remains only for them to take up with some disorder'd fancies of their own; or, which is much more common, with the dictates of *artificial designing men*, or *crack-brain'd enthusiasts*: for as none else presume to be *guides*, or to have any authority over others in matters of *speculation*, so they who think they ought to be *guided* in those matters very naturally have recourse to such for their *guides*. And if they ever depart from the sentiments they have once imbib'd, and from being obstinate in one set of opinions become obstinate in another; their change must still be founded on the same motives, and their opinions be as absurd as at first. For as *truth* will never serve the *purposes* of *knaves*, so it will never suit the *understandings* of *fools*; and the *latter* will ever be as well pleas'd in being deceiv'd, as the *former* in deceiving. It is therefore without the least hopes of doing any good, but purely to comply with your *request*, that I send you this *Apology for free-thinking*; which, as it is one of those subjects too evident to be made plainer, and which ought to be admitted on the first *proposal*, so all that can be said in its behalf must be built on *topicks* less evident than the thing it self.

of FREE-THINKING. 3

S E C T. I.

That I may proceed orderly, I will begin with defining the *term*.

By *free-thinking* then I mean, *The use of the understanding, in endeavouring to find out the meaning of any proposition whatsoever, in considering the nature of the evidence for or against it, and in judging of it according to the seeming force or weakness of the evidence.* This definition cannot, I conceive, be excepted against by the enemies of *free-thinking*, as not including the crime with which they charge *free-thinkers*, in order to render them odious to *unthinking people* (for if there is any crime in *free-thinking*, that crime must be contain'd in a definition which lays no manner of restraint upon *thinking*) and they must allow, that if I vindicate man's right to *think freely* in the full extent of my definition, I not only apologize for my self, who profess to *think freely* every day *de quolibet ente*, but for all the *free-thinkers* who ever were, or ever shall be.

To prove this right to *think freely*, I argue.

1st. If the knowledg of some truths be requir'd of us by God: if the knowledg of others be useful to society; if the knowledg of no truth be forbidden us by God, or hurtful to us; then we have a right to know, or may lawfully know, any truth whatsoever. And if we have a right to know any truth whatsoever, we have a right to *think freely* or (according to my definition) to use our understandings, in endeavouring to find out the meaning

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ning of any proposition whatsoever, in considering the nature of the evidence for or against it, and in judging of it according to the seeming force or weakness of the evidence: because there is no other way to discover the truth.

2dly. As in *manual arts* we do only by *free trial*, comparison, and experience of every thing, come to know what is best and perfect in each art; so in the *sciences*, *perfection* is only to be attain'd by *free-thinking*.

Let *painters* be so far confin'd in their art by the religion of their country, as to have it thought unlawful to paint any living creature; it is evident the art in that particular would be narrow'd and restrain'd, and we should want many beautiful pieces, for which *Pagan* and *Christian Divinity* furnish the painter with matter. And if any bold and *free painter* should transgress the establish'd law of painting, and venture upon painting either a God or Goddess, or any passage of the life of our blessed Saviour; nothing is more plain than that the first draught would be as far short of the perfection of our best pictures, as the painter himself must be short of our best painters in experience. Nay, let *free painting* be allow'd, perfection will never be reach'd in that art, unless suitable encouragements be given to *free painters* for what is excellent in its kind, to the end there may be numbers of men employ'd, who by emulation may strive to exceed one another in their performances. Thus the *Italians*, by the publick encouragement given, excel us *Britans* in painting; tho *free painting* is allow'd in each country: and we in all likelihood, for want of many hands being employ'd and encourag'd,
shall

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shall continue for ever in our *barbarous state*, with respect to any tolerable degree of a just taste, or ability to perform in that *art*.

In like manner, let men be *restrain'd* from thinking on *any science* or *any part of a science*, they must be ignorant so far as the *restraint* goes. And if a few men take now and then a little liberty, and break thro' the establish'd *restraint*, their thoughts will never be so perfect as if all men were allow'd and encourag'd to think of that matter: but their progress in *thinking* will be only proportionate to that degree of *free-thinking* which prevails. Thus before the restoration of learning, when men were subject to the impositions of *priests*, a prodigious ignorance prevail'd. And when they began to think, their first notions were rude and imperfect, and time and pains were necessary to bring them to that degree of justness they are at present arriv'd to. It was by gradual progress in *thinking*, that men got so much knowledg in *Astronomy*, as to know that the *earth* was of an *orbicular figure*, and that it moves about the *sun*. It was by that means, that we arriv'd at a demonstration of the existence of but one God, and at that strict and philosophical notion of him, as a *being destitute of all parts and passions*. And thus it has been with respect to all our other *discoveries*.

Besides, we are not only so far ignorant in the *sciences*, as we are under any restraint from *thinking* about them; but we must be ignorant even in those *sciences* whereof we pretend to think, if we refuse to think of any other *science* whatsoever. For there is a * relation, harmony, dependency, and

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* *Omnes artes, quæ ad humanitatem pertinent, habent quoddam*

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connection among all things; and the knowledge of one *science* or *art* can never be thorowly obtain'd without the knowledge of other *arts* and *sciences*: Nay, take any book that is a masterpiece in its kind, and you will find it has a relation to them all, and that a very general and extensive knowledge was necessary to its composition. In the *Iliad* of HOMER, there is not an *art* or *science*, or branch of any *art* or *science*, but there are some parts which have relation to it, and which the nature of the work requir'd: and those parts are as accurately and justly perform'd, as if each part had been done by one who was particularly vers'd in the *art* or *science* refer'd to. As for instance, HOMER could never have describ'd as he ought, nor in the manner he has done, a *chariot* or a *chariot-wheel*, without the particular knowledge of a *coachmaker*: and such knowledge was absolutely necessary to his purpose: for if he had talk'd of those things without that accurate knowledge, he had certainly fallen into those mistakes which men ever do, when they venture to talk of what they do not understand: and if he had omitted such descriptions, his poem, which now to *all eternity* will please and instruct mankind, had been imperfect. It is this universal knowledge of things display'd in the *Iliad*, which makes it esteem'd so perfect a work, and is the foundation of that known commendation of HOMER by the *criticks*, that *the principles of all arts and sciences are contain'd in him*.

But to come to an instance wherein we are more concern'd: The *Bible* contains a collection of

dam commune vinculum, & quasi cognatione quâdam inter se continentur. Cicero pro Archia Poëtâ.

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of *tracts* given us at divers times by *God* himself; and consequently every thing therein mention'd is handled with the utmost degree of exactness : for it is impossible that *God*, when he condescends to teach mankind by writing or books, should write as ill, or worse than mortal men, and act against the rules of *art* in writing, and express error and falsehood instead of justness and proportion.

Now there is not perhaps in the world so *miscellaneous* a book, and which treats of such variety of things as the *bible* does. There is a *natural history* of the creation of the whole universe, and of an *universal deluge* of this earth; and a *civil and ecclesiastical history* of all mankind, from the beginning of the world for above 2000. years, and of a *particular nation* for above 800. years. There are contain'd in it the *municipal laws* of a country, the *institution* of two Religions (one whereof was to put an end to the other) several *natural and miraculous phenomena* of nature, descriptions of magnificent buildings, references to Husbandry, Sailing, Physick, Pharmacy, Mathematicks, and every thing else that can be named. And indeed the compass of such a *history* shews that no *art* or *science* can be untouch'd in it. To understand the matter therefore of this book, requires the most *thinking* of all other books; since to be master of the whole, a man must be able to think justly in every *science* and *art*. Who can understand the order and perfection of the *historical part*, and the completion of the prophecies about our blessed Saviour, without being a consummate master in antient History, and Chronology, and in the laws of each of those arts? How many years of the life of the greatest *chronologer* in the world

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(the present *Bishop of Worcester*) must have been spent only in adjusting the *seventy weeks* of D A N I E L to the times of the M E S S I A H , when his Lordship's work on that subject has already been above ten years in the press ? Who can frame an idea of the beauty and magnificence of S O L O M O N ' s *Temple* , or of that *model* delineated in E Z E K I E L , without a perfect knowledg in *Mathematicks* , and in particular of the rules of *Architecture* ? Who can have a just notion of the *creation* and *deluge* , without the knowledg of *all nature* ? How is it possible for any man to enter into the meaning of the several passages of scripture , which seemingly exhibit to us *an idea of God* after a human manner , without the most refin'd *Metaphysicks* , and the deepest thinking and philosophizing on the nature and attribures of *God* ? Nay , the *morality* of the *holy-scripture* is not to be precisely and-distinctly understood , without an antecedent knowledg in *Ethicks* , or in the *law of nature* . Who can without a knowledg in that *law* understand wherein consist the *duties* of *loving our enemys* , of *not caring for the morrow* , of *not having two coats* , and all other *dutys* express'd in so universal a manner ? The passages themselves not exhibiting the necessary limitations and restrictions which are imply'd , those restrictions and limitations are only to be deduc'd from the *law of nature* . Nay , when the *dutys* enjoin'd are as *universal* as the expressions , that *universality* is only to be known by considering whether the *law of nature* in those cases admits of any limitation or no .

Upon the whole therefore , *thinking* upon all human *sciences* , being the only way of arriving at perfection in them ; nay , being the only method

of FREE-THINKING. 9

to make a man understand the sublimest of all sciences, *Theology*, or the will of God contain'd in the holy scriptures, it must be at least lawful, or a man's right, to think freely.

3dly. If men either neglect to think, or come once to be persuaded they have no right to think freely, they can not only obtain no perfection in the sciences, but must, if they will have any opinions, run into the grossest absurdities imaginable both in principle and practice. What absurd notions of a *Deity* have formerly prevail'd, not only among *Pagans*, but even among *Christians*? who tho they did not with the *Pagans* suppose their *God* to be like an ox, or a cat, or a plant, yet some of the most ancient fathers of the Church no less absurdly suppos'd him to be material; and many *Christians* in all ages suppos'd him to have the shape of a man, till thinking about the nature of *God* did establish his spirituality among men of sense in every country of *Christians*.

What absurd notions in *Religion*, contrary to the most obvious notions of sense and reason, overspread the whole *Christian Church* for many ages? Infallibility in a single person or in a council, the power of the priest to damn and save, the worship of images, pictures, Saints, and relicks, and a thousand other absurdities as gross as ever prevail'd in any *Pagan* nation, were opinions almost universally receiv'd and believ'd by *Christians*; and what is still more wonderful, even while they receiv'd a book for divine revelation, point-blank contrary to them all; till the thinking of a few, some whereof sacrific'd their lives by so doing, gave a new turn to the *Christian world*, and occasion'd a prodigious change,

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by establishing contrary notions in some countries, and by obliging those who pretended to retain the old ones, to vary a little out of pure shame in the explication of their phrases and expressions.

Lastly, what absurdities prevail'd in *Morality, Astronomy, Natural Philosophy*, and every other science? *Self-defence in any case whatsoever* was by the primitive fathers held unlawful: *second marriages* were esteem'd by them a kind of adultery: *usury* was suppos'd to be forbid by the law of God. To maintain there were *Antipodes*, was heresy: And *Galileus*, even in the last age was imprison'd for asserting the motion of the earth. In short, for a picture of ancient absurdities, a man need but examine any one now-a-days who has never *thought freely* of things, and he will ever find him unable to advance one word of truth in any matter of science whatsoever, no not even in his notions of God and Religion, tho he hears the most perfect discourses every week to set him right, and reads his Bible at home. For men are incapable of information either from *discourse* or *reading*, unless they have accustom'd themselves to *thinking*, and by that habit are qualify'd to *think* of the subject whereon they hear or read a *discourse*. To be inform'd, consists in being made to *think* justly and truly of things: but how should men think *justly*, who do not think *freely*? How indeed can men *think* at all of any thing, of which they do not *think freely*? For what is a restraint of *free-thinking* on any subject, but somewhat which hinders me from *thinking* on that subject?

But to give you the most perfect image I am able, how unavoidable absurditys are both in principle
and

of FREE-THINKING. 11

and practice, if *thinking* is restrain'd; I will put the case of *free-seeing*, and suppose the same methods made use of to prevent *free-seeing* which are to prevent *free-thinking*. Suppose then, that certain men have a fancy in their heads, that it is absolutely necessary, either to the peace of society, or some other great purpose, that all men should have the same belief with relation to certain objects of the eyes; and in order to obtain that end, that all under their power should subscribe the same *confession* of *eye-sight faith*. Now such a fancy as this can hardly come into any mens heads, but either of such as are some way or other very remarkable for that kind of madness which common people will be apt to mistake for *divine illumination*, or else of *cunning projecting fellows* who have a design upon mens pockets. For I think men of real sense, and that have no interested designs, will either judg all mistakes of that nature to be pass'd over and forgiven, since no man can be willingly guilty of them; or if they should happen to think such mistakes to be of very bad consequence, and to be unpardonable, yet they will judg that the best way to make men *see truly*, is to make them *see freely*; and that it is more reasonable to let all men trust to their own eyes (who have the greatest interest in not deceiving themselves) than to oblige them to take up with an *eye-sight faith*, upon the authority of *others who have nothing else at best but their own eyesight to direct them, and who may as well be mistaken as any body else, thro weakness of eyes; and besides may have a design to deceive mankind*. I say therefore, that whoever is capable of such a *ridiculous project*, must be either a *weak* or a *designing man*. And let him be which you please, he will of course

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course make an absurd confession of *eye-sight faith*. The former, for want of a full and impartial examination, will take up with the first false sensations of things; and the latter will more certainly do so, to make himself the more necessary in explaining, defending, paraphrasing, note-making, and commenting upon eyes and *eye-sight faith*. So that I will suppose among the various and contradictory forms of confession, which men of different whims, or of different interests and designs, will make at different times, one to consist of these following articles.

* That a ball can go thro a table :
 That two balls may be made out of one little one :
 That a stone can be made to vanish out of sight :
 That a knot can be undone with words :
 That a thred may be burnt to pieces, and made whole
 with the ashes :
 That one face may be a hundred, or a thousand :
 And lastly, That a counter may be turn'd into a
 groat.

These propositions being drawn up in form, as the *standard* of *eye-sight faith*, it will be absolutely necessary either that men should be oblig'd to subscribe to their *truth*, or that none be allow'd publickly to contradict them; or at least that some encouragement be given to those who profess to believe and teach them; for otherwise no end would be serv'd by drawing them up; and men would be as much at liberty to use their eyes as they were before.

Nor is it to be imagin'd, that the zealous advocates for *them* will content themselves with the
 mere

* *Hocus Pocus* Jun. p. 13. 15. 36. 43. 45. 47.

of FREE-THINKING. 13

mere imposition of *those absurditys*. They will introduce several other *new absurditys*, by the various *reasonings*, *comments* and *turns* which so many absurditys in *eye-sight* will oblige them to make. The several propositions will be said by *them* to be *above*, but *not contrary* to *eye-sight*. Instances will be given of ten thousand mistakes in using our *eyes*. It will be esteem'd dangerous trusting to *carnal eye-sight*, and be said that we ought to rely on the authority of those men who have *pensions* and *salarys* on purpose to *pore* on those things, and would not deserve what they receive, should men use their own *eye-sight*. And as for those few men who should dare to use their own *eyes*, no punishments would be too bad for them; and the least evil they could expect, would be to be render'd odious to the multitude, under the reproachful ideas of *scepticks*, *latitudinarians*, *free-seers*, *opiniators*, men ty'd by no authority, and who reject all opinions, how universally soever receiv'd; to be represented sometimes as madmen, at other times as subtle cunning fellows who acted by confederacy, and had secret underhand pensions from the lord knows who, and who were assisted by the *Devil*.

All this may perhaps at first view be look'd on as impossible, and it may be thought that mankind can never be impos'd on to such a *degree*; I will therefore justify the representation I have made, from matters of fact practis'd both among *Pagans* and *Christians*.

To begin first with the *Pagans*. The whole *affair* of *Oracles* among them was nothing else but the *artifice* of *priests* to impose on the senses of the people. The *Oracular Temples* or *Churches*
were

were built in mountainous countries, where of course there were abundance of *caverns* and *holes*, and where *echoes*, *noises*, and *dismal prospects* struck those who visited them with a *superstitious awe*. The *Temples* themselves were contriv'd to produce the same effect. They were full of *subterraneous caverns* and *machines*, like a *play-house*, for the *priests* to act their *parts* in them. The *Pagans* likewise had *speaking oaks*, *nodding*, *sweating*, *weeping*, *bleeding*, and *speaking statues*. In *some places* the *priests* made the people believe, they *saw heaven* just over their heads; and that when it rain'd hard the *Gods* open'd the *windows of heaven*, and pour'd the rain down upon them; and that the *smoke of burnt sacrifices* ascended thither, fed the *Gods*, and was a *sweet savour in their nostrils*. In *other places* agreeably to the same supposition of the nearness of *heaven*, they perswaded them, that the *Gods* themselves came down from *heaven*, and eat of the *repasts* which the *priests* prepar'd for them at the expence of the people. To preserve a *right belief* in severall of those matters among the people, the *priests* kept all * *unbelievers* as much as possible from coming within any distance of them when they began their *show*. All *Epicureans* were declar'd incapable of being initiated into any of the *Pagan mysteries of religion*; and both *Epicureans* and *Christians* were religiously chas'd away, before ever the *priests* would pronounce any *Oracles*, or begin any of their *tricks*. And when the *Christians* grew so numerous that they were able to stand their ground, and refus'd to retire at the *word of command*, the *priests* declar'd there were so many *impious persons* present, that the *God* would not vouchsafe to speak, and that they could do no
mira-

* *Procul este profani.*

of FREE-THINKING. 15

miracles because of *their unbelief*, no more than the * *Pawawers* in *America* could in the presence of the *old clothes* of some *Christian sailors*. Not only the *unbelieving Christians* and *Epicureans* were excluded from *free-seeing*, but the *Pagan believers* were allow'd to *see* no further than their *faith* qualify'd them to do with safety. They were not suffer'd to examine the *insides* of *Temples* or *Statues*, nor the evidence the *priests* gave of the *Gods* coming down from *heaven* to eat upon earth. No, about these matters the people were to have a *faith*, which *free-seeing* would have destroy'd; and which would have render'd the *priests* as contemptible, as DANIEL did those of BELL, or as the *Christians* did the *Oracular priests*, when the *craft* of *Oracles* was laid open before the whole world.

The † *priests* of SIAM, among other *miracles* which may be confuted by *free-seeing*, tell the people that SOMMONOCODOM, the *God* and *author* of their religion, diverting himself one day with the *divine sport* of *Kite-flying*, did by his mere word cause several tall trees, which disturb'd his sport, to become low, & to be as even and regular as if cut by a *Gardiner*. And they perswade them, that those trees have continued from that time without any alteration or change UNTO THIS DAY, that is, for the space of above two thousand years. Upon which my Author FATHER TACHARD observes, that the *preists* have a very easy task in imposing this on the people, who it seems have never had infidelity enough to look and see whether the trees are the same one day as another.

This

* *Waser's Voyages*, p. 29.

† *Tachard Voyage de Siam*. vol. 2. p. 254.

This sort of *eye-sight faith* is kept up among some *Christians* as well as *Pagans*. * *There is a persuasion among the Greeks and Armenians, that every Easter-eve there is a miraculous flame descends from heaven into the holy sepulcher of our blessed Saviour (which the Latins expose as a shameful imposture, perhaps out of envy that others should be masters of so gainful a business.) And they further believe, That the holy ghost himself in the shape of a dove flies about the top of the cupola of the church just over the holy sepulcher. But the reception of the holy flame is trusted to two priests, one a Greek and the other an Armenian, who go into the holy sepulcher, shut the door, and suffer no body to see freely what they do, and then come out with torches lighted by the holy flame. And no doubt the affair of the dove is trusted either to a priest, or some body on whom they can safely rely for the keeping of so valuable a secret. Nor is it to be thought but both priests and people would be ready to call any man Atheist or impious, who should desire the liberty of going into the holy sepulcher with the two priests in order to see freely, or should desire to make any experiment on the dove, to try whether it was the holy ghost or no. For the Zeal of the priests must be in proportion to the gain they make by this trick, and of the people in proportion to the benefit they imagine they shall receive from the holy flame : for the latter believe, If they can but have the happiness to be bury'd in a shroud, smutted with the smoke of this celestial fire, it will certainly secure them from the flames of hell.*

Another

* Maundrel's *Voyage from Aleppo to Jerusalem*, p. 93. 94. 95. 96.

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Another *miracle* of the like nature with the preceding, is firmly believ'd by the * *Greeks*, but especially by the *women*. They carry annually in procession *three pictures*, one of St. GEORGE, another of the *virgin MARY*, and another of *some other Saint*; which strike with sticks, or belabour the back and shoulders of those who carry them, more or less, according to the sins of their bearers. This trick Sir P. RICAUT himself saw, and he assures us, That the belief of the miracle has taken so deep root in the minds of the ignorant, that it would be hard to undeceive them; without danger to the whole fabrick of the Christian Religion: for this belief being equally fix'd with the doctrines of faith, the confutation of this one would bring the others into question. And no doubt therefore, but these people must be as zealous against free-seers, (if any such dared to desire the inspection of the pictures) as themselves are short-sighted and absurd.

The present *Roman priests* are not behindhand with the old and modern *Heathen priests*, or with the present *Greek and Armenian*, in their impositions on the peoples eye-sight (being guided by a maxim of one of their own poets, † *That he only sees the things of heaven, who shuts his eyes and believes*) and are infinitely superior to any set of priests that ever existed, in their zeal against free-seers.

Should any one desire to inspect the annual miracle of the liquefaction of St. JANUARIUS'S
B blood

* Ricaut's *Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 148.

† *Che le cose del ciel sol colui vede*,
Chisferragli occhi, e crede. Filli di Sciro p. 168

blood at Naples, or any of their numerous sweating, bleeding, nodding, and weeping statues; or to examine strictly those men upon whom the daily trick of casting out Devils is perform'd; or to see the famous † candle of Arras, which the virgin MARY deliver'd to the Bishop of that place before a great assembly of the People in the Church above 600. years ago, and which has burnt ever since without wasting; nothing short of death would be the consequence of such a demand: tho the author of the relation of the last miracle invites Protestants to come to Arras to see the truth of it, in order to their conviction. Nay, so numerous are the impositions on the eye-sight, and so strict a care is taken to prevent men from using their eyes, that there is not an inquisitive person, or a man who desires to see freely, to be met with in a whole country. The *Popish* laity will not bear so great an approach to *infidelity* as the suspicion of a *trick*, and the *Popish* priests have good reason not to suffer the beginning of any examination. And I must needs say, how much soever I contend for *free-seeing*, I cannot but commend the consistency of the *Popish* policy, and prefer it to the *policy* of certain half-witted politicians, who draw people in with a pretence of fair play, by telling them they shall and ought to see freely; whereas if they do not see with the eyes of their guides, but desire to see with their own, they then use them, not indeed so ill as the *Papists*, but as ill as they can; that is, as ill as that degree of ignorance and stupidity which prevails will allow them to do.

The *Popish*, *Lutheran*, & several other
Chris-

† Discourse of the Miracles of the Roman Church, p. 63.
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Christian priests are guilty of an imposition on the *eye-sight* and *other senses* beyond all the instances already mention'd. The first pretend, that the bread and wine in the Lord's supper do by their consecration become the very body and blood of Christ, and face men down in it, contrary to the testimony of their senses: and the latter, no less contrary to the testimony of mens senses, make their followers believe, that the body and blood of *Christ* are superadded to the bread and wine. Which is a piece of impudence equal to that of a man's wife, who, when her husband caught her in bed with a *priest*, told him, *It was nothing but a deception of the Devil to abuse a man of God*, and that she *hoped he would believe his own dear wife before his eyes*. Nor are those *priests*, who pretend that men eat & drink the body & blood of Christ, *verily & indeed by faith, in the Lords supper*, less absurd, or less guilty of imposing on the senses of the people.

Thus the reader sees the monstrous absurditys which do in fact and must necessarily arise from the methods employ'd to restrain men in the use of their facultys. But if it be possible, the absurditys which relate to the facultys of the mind must be greater and more numerous than those which relate to the senses; because men do use their senses more than their understandings, and by consequence have clearer ideas of the objects of sense than of the objects of the understanding.

athly. Any restraint whatsoever from reason on thinking, is absurd in it self. No just restraint can be put to my thinking, but some thought, some proposition, or argument, which shews me that it is not lawful for me to think on the subject

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I am upon. As for instance, I propose to consider, *Whether the Christian Religion is founded on divine revelation*; but am told, or suggest to my self, the great danger and sinfulness of thinking on that subject, for fear I should be caught by the sophistical arguments of infidels, and so be eternally damn'd for my unbelief: whereas I am in the way of salvation, and in no danger in my unexamining state; and therefore it is sinful in me to run any hazard, by thinking on that matter.

It is evident this *restraining argument* must be *thought freely on*, or examin'd; for if I do not examine it, I cannot know that I ought to be restrain'd by it, but may proceed in my propos'd enquiry.

Now let this *restraining argument* be examin'd, and it will be found to have no manner of weight in it to restrain me. For what can be more absurd? I have no way of knowing truth from falsehood, or whether I am in a safe or a dangerous state, but by using the understanding and reason God has given me; and yet I must without any reason at all suppose my self in a right and safe way. Nay, I am deter'd from taking the best method of preventing dangerous mistakes, for fear of falling into dangerous mistakes; which is as if I should be deter'd from using my eyes, for fear I should mistake in using them; and I should walk abroad with my eyes shut, because of the possibility of falling if I should walk abroad with my eyes open. So that this *restraining argument* is manifestly absurd, which pretends to divert me a moment from the prosecution of my enquiry.

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I cannot pretend to assign, and answer all the restraining arguments, which bigotted or interested men make use of, at different times and on different occasions, in order to stop the progress of mens minds in thinking on this question, and others of the like nature. It is enough to assign and answer that which is the most plausible and most frequently urg'd; and to affirm here, that the most zealous of the *unthinking*, or *half-thinking*, or *enemys of free-thinking*, are not able to assign any *argument* which ought to lay a *restraint* in this or any other *question* whatsoever: for whoever *affirms* that I ought to be *restrain'd* from thinking, is in virtue of that *affirmation* oblig'd to assign some *argument* or other which ought to lay a *restraint* upon me.

5thly. I must not omit one great benefit of *free-thinking*, of which all past ages as well as the present may convince us. *Free-thinking* is upon experience the only proper means to destroy the *Devil's Kingdom* among men; whose dominion and power are always more or less extensive, as *free-thinking* is discourag'd or allow'd: and all other means employ'd against him, such as the *casting him out miraculously*, *multiplying priests*, and *enlarging their power*, and *using the temporal sword*, have often increas'd, but never wholly destroy'd his *power*.

Thus the *Devil* is intirely banish'd the *United Provinces*, where *free-thinking* is in the greatest perfection; And where there is not so much as a *provisonal law* against *witches* or *others* in league with the *Devil*; whereas all round about that *commonwealth*, he appears in various shapes: sometimes in his own, sometimes in the shape of

*an old black Gentleman, sometimes in the shape of a dead man, and sometimes in that of a * cat. He obsesses some, possesses others, and enters into confederacy with others. As for instance, he has had from the remotest antiquity a great sway in England; first, while we were in Heathen darknes, and afterwards a greater during the thicker darknes of Popery. Nor did the Reformation it self do much towards lessening his power; for great complaints have been made of the growth of witchcraft, and the mighty power of the Devil among us from those most primitive times of our Holy Church, viz. about 150. years ago.*

† Bishop JEWEL, in a Sermon before Queen ELIZABETH, told her Majesty of the marvelous intcrease of witches and sorcerers within her realm, and exprest his fears lest her Majesty her self should be bewitch'd by them. I pray God, says he, they never practise further than upon the subject.

His Sacred Majesty King JAMES the first (who was told to his face by the ‡ Archbishop of Canterbury, that his Majesty spake by the special assistance of God's spirit, and who employ'd his Royal pen always on subjects worthy of a Prince, viz. *A Paraphrase on the Revelation, A Counterblast to Tobacco-taking, and § Love-Letters to the Duke of Buckingham*) tells us, ¶ *That the fearful abounding at this time, in this country, of these detestable slaves*

* Vid. The late Hertford Trial.

† Strype's Annals, p. 7.

‡ Hampton-Court Conference, p. 96.

§ Hist. of Engl. vol. 2. in the Life of King James I.

¶ Works, p. 91.

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slaves of the Devil the witches and enchanters, mov'd him to dispatch in post his Treatise of Demonology.

In the reign of King CHARLES the first, it ought likewise to be suppos'd that many people of the Church were obsess'd and possess'd by the Devil; since among the Articles of enquiry at a visitation of the diocess of London in 1640. by Bishop JUXON then Lord Treasurer of England, one is, *Whether any minister without licence, upon any pretence whatsoever, either of obsession or possession, casts out any Devil or Devils.*

In short, great numbers of witches have been almost annually executed in England, from the remotest antiquity to the late Revolution; when upon the liberty given and taken to think freely, the Devil's power visibly declin'd, and England as well as the United Provinces ceas'd to be any part of his Christian territories.

Let the priests give such an instance of their success against the Devil any where.

But since the beginning of Dr. SACHEVEREL'S reign, when the clamours against free-thinking began to be loudest, the Devil has again resum'd his empire, appears in the shape of cats, and enters into confederacy with old women; and several have been try'd, and many are accus'd, thro all parts of the kingdom for being witches. He seems at present to have so great a party among us, and so many ministers ordain'd to his service, and to have render'd free-thinking so odious, that nothing but the second coming of our blessed Saviour (which is soon expected by several of our

Reeverend Divines, who are well skill'd in the *Prophecs and Revelation*) gives me any hopes of a *change* for the better.

Perhaps it will be said, *That the stories of the Devil's Power were founded on the lyes of some and the credulity of others; and that the executions of witches have been so many murders: And therefore that there is no pretence to talk of conquest over the Devil since the Revolution, and nothing to be boasted of by free-thinkers. The people were only come a little more to their senses, and by consequence their Tutors were a little fearful of endeavouring to impose on them.*

But this objection can be made by very few. *First*, All the ignorant people believe all storys of this kind to be true. *Secondly*, It is not likely, that they who have so great an Interest in maintaining the *power of the Devil*, and have been the principal promoters of all prosecutions against *witches*, and have branded all men with *Atheism* who did not agree with them in the extent of the power they attributed to the *Devil*, or refus'd to join with them in the promoting prosecutions against *witches*, should accept of this apology.

To those *few* therefore who make this objection, I reply, That it is an equal glory to *free-thinkers* to wrest out of the *priests* hands the power of taking away so many innocent peoples lives and reputations (which the * *General belief* of the

* I desire I may not be so far mistaken in what I here say as to be suppos'd to charge either the Clergy of England in general, or even the reverend Actors and Under-Actors at the late Hertford Tryal with the beleif of Sorcery or Witchcraft.

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the great power of the *Devil* and of the existence of *witches* gave *them* an opportunity to do) as to drive away the *Devil* himself. And the good consequence of *free-thinking* to *society*, is plainly equal upon this last, as upon the former supposition.

S E C T. II.

THe *subjects* of which men are deny'd the right to think by the *enemys* of *free-thinking*, are of all others those of which men have not only a right to think, but of which they are oblig'd in duty to think; viz. such as of the nature and attributes of the eternal being or God; of the truth and authority of books esteem'd sacred; and of the sense and meaning of those books; or, in one word, of Religious questions.

1st. A right opinion in these matters is suppos'd by the *enemys* of *free-thinking* to be absolutely necessary to mens salvation, and some errors or mistakes about them are suppos'd to be damnable. Now where a right opinion is so necessary, there men have the greatest concern imaginable to think for themselves, as the best means to take up with the right side of the question. For if they will not think for themselves, it remains only for them to take the opinions they have imbib'd from their grandmothers, mothers or

B 5 priests

craft. On the contrary I agree with Phileleutherus Lipsiensis, one of my Answerers, who says, That fewer of the Clergy [in conversation with one another] give into particular stories of that kind, than of the Commonalty or Gentry. Remarks on the Disc. of free-thinking, p. 33.

priests, or owe to such like *accident*, for granted. But taking that method, they can only be in the right by chance; whereas by *thinking* and examination, they have not only the mere accident of being in the right, but have the evidence of things to determine them to the side of truth: unless it be suppos'd that men are such absurd *animals*, that the *most unreasonable opinion* is as likely to be admitted for true as the *most reasonable*, when it is judg'd of by the reason and understanding of men. In that case indeed it will follow, that men can be under no obligation to think of these matters. But then it will likewise follow, that they can be under no obligation to concern themselves about truth and falsehood in any opinions. For if men are so absurd, as not to be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood, evidence and no evidence, what pretence is there for mens having any opinions at all? Which yet none judg so necessary as the *enemys of free-thinking*.

2dly. If the surest and best means of arriving at *truthly* in *free-thinking*, then the *whole duty of man* with respect to opinions lies only in *free-thinking*. Because he who *thinks freely* does his best towards being in the right, and consequently does all that God, who can require nothing more of any man than that he should do his best, can require of him. And should he prove mistaken in any opinions, he must be as acceptable to God as if he receiv'd none but right *opinions*. This is admirably express'd by that true *Christian* and *Protestant* (and by consequence great *free-thinker*) Mr. CHILLINGWORTH, who says *,
that if men do their best endeavours to free themselves

* *Answ. to Pref. of Charity maintain'd Sect. 26.*

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selves from all errors, and yet fail of it thro human weakness; so well is he persuaded of the goodness of God, that if in him alone should meet a confluence of all errors of all the Protestants in the world that were thus qualify'd, he should not be so much afraid of them all, as he should be to ask pardon for them. For to ask pardon for such errors, is tacitly to imply that God is angry with us for them; and that were to impute to him the strange tyranny of requiring brick where he gives no straw; of expecting to gather where he strewed not; to reap where he sowed not; of being offended with us for not doing, what he knows we cannot do.

On the other side, the whole *crime* of men, with respect to *opinions*, must lie in their not *thinking freely*. He who is in the right by accident only, and does but suppose himself to be so without any *thinking*, is really in a dangerous state, as having taken no pains and used no endeavours towards being in the right, and consequently as having no merit; nay, as being on the same foot with the most stupid *Papist* and *Heathen*. For when once men refuse or neglect to think, and take up their opinions upon trust, they do in effect declare, they would have been *Papists* or *Heathens*, had they had *Popish* or *Heathen Priests* for their guides, or *Popish* or *Heathen Grandmothers* to have taught them their *Catechisms*.

3dly. Superstition is an *evil*, which either by the means of education, or the natural weakness of men, oppresses almost all mankind. And how terrible an *evil* it is, is well describ'd by the ancient

tient Philosophers and Poets. CICE RO says, * If you give way to superstition, it will ever haunt and plague you. If you hear a prophet, or an ominous word; if you sacrifice or observe the flight of birds; if you see an Astrologer or Haruspex; if it thunders or lightens, or any place is blasted with lightning, or any thing like a Prodigy happens (of which some or other must often happen) all the tranquillity of the mind is destroy'd. And sleep it self, which seems to be an asylum and refuge from all trouble and uneasiness, does by the aid of superstition increase your troubles and fears.

HORACE ranks superstition with vice; and as he makes the happiness of man in this life to consist in the practice of virtue and freedom from superstition, so he makes the greatest misery of this life to consist in being vicious and superstitious. † You are not covetous, says he, that's well: but are you as free from all other vices? Are you free from ambition, excessive anger, and the fear of death? Are you so much above superstition, as to laugh at all dreams, ‡ panick fears, miracles, witches, ghosts, and prodigys?

This

* *Superstitio enim instat & urget, & quocunque te verteris persequitur: sive tu vatem, sive tu omen audieris; sive immolaris, sive avem aspexeris, sive Chaldaum; si haruspiciem videris; si fulseris, si tonuerit, si tactum aliquid de caelo erit, si ostenti simile natum factumve quidpiam; quorum necesse est plerumque aliquid eveniat: ut nunquam quietâ mente liceat consistere. Perfugium videtur omnium laborum & sollicitudinum esse somnus; at ex ipso plurima nascuntur cura metusque.*
De Divin. l. 2.

† Non es avarus: abi; quid; cetera jam simul isto Cum vitio fugere? Caret tibi pectus inani Ambitione? Caret mortis formidine & ira? Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas, Nocturnos lemures, portantaque Thessalares? ‡ See the Horace of Pere Tartaron.

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This was the state of *superstition* among the *antients*; but since uncharitableness and *damning* to all *eternity* about the *practise* of *ceremonys* & the *beleif* of *speculations* has (in opposition both to reason and revelation) come into the world, the evil of *superstition* is much increas'd, and men are now under greater terrors and uneasiness of mind than they possibly could be when they thought they hazarded less.

Now there is *no just remedy* to this universal evil but *free-thinking*. By that alone can we understand the true *causes* of things, and by consequence the unreasonableness of all *superstitious* fears. * *Happy is the man*, says the divine VIRGIL, *who has discover'd the causes of things, and has trampled under his feet all kind of fears, even death it self, and all the noise and din of hell.* For by *free-thinking* alone men are capable of knowing, that a perfectly good, just, wise and powerful *being* made and governs the world; and from this principle they know, that he can require nothing of men in any country or condition of life, but that whereof he has given them an opportunity of being convinc'd by evidence and reason in the place where they are, and in that condition of life to which birth or any other chance has directed them; that an honest and rational man can have no just reason to fear any thing from him: nay, on the contrary, must have so great a delight and satisfaction in believing such a *being* exists, that he can much better be suppos'd to fear lest no such *being* should exist, than to fear any harm from him. And lastly, that

* *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
Atque metus omnes & inexorabile Fatum
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari.*

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that God being incapable of having any addition made either to his power or happiness, and wanting nothing, can require nothing of men for his own sake, but only for man's sake; and consequently, that all *actions* and *speculations* which are of no use to mankind, (as for instance, *singing* or *dancing*, or *wearing of habits*, or *observation of days*, or *eating* or *drinking*, or *slaughtering of beasts* (in which things the greatest part of the *Heathen worship* consisted) or the belief of *transubstantiation* or *consubstantiation*, or of any *doctrines*, not taught by the *Church of England*) either signify nothing at all with God, or else displease him, but can never render a man more acceptable to him.

By means of all this, a man may possess his soul in peace, as having an expectation of enjoying all the good things which God can bestow, and no fear of any future misery or evil from his hands; and the very worst of his state can only be, that he is pleasantly deceiv'd.

Whereas *superstitious* men are incapable of believing in a perfectly just and good God. They make him talk to all mankind from corners, and consequently require things of men under the penalty of misery in the next world, of which they are incapable of having any convincing evidence that they are requir'd by him. They make him (who *equally beholds all the dwellers upon earth*) to have *favorite nations* and *people*, without any consideration of merit. They make him put other *nations* under disadvantages without any demerit. And so they are more properly to be stil'd *Demonists* than *Theists*. No wonder therefore if such men should be so full of fears
of

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of the wrath of God, that they are sometimes tempted (with the vicious) to wish there was no God at all ; a thought so unnatural and absurd, that even * *speculative Atheists* would abhor it. Those men have no quiet in their own minds ; they † rove about in search of *saving truth* thro the dark corners of the earth, and are so foolish as to hope to find it (if I may so say) hid under the *sands* of *Africa*, where *Cato* scorn'd to look for it : and neglecting what God speaks plainly to the whole world, take up with what they suppose he has communicated to a few ; and thereby believe and practise such things, in which they can never have satisfaction. For suppose men take up with a Religion which consists in *dancing* or *musick*, or such-like *ceremonies*, or in *useless* and *unintelligible speculations* ; how can they be assur'd they believe and perform as they ought ? What rule can such men have to know whether other *ceremonys*, and *useless* and *unintelligible speculations*, may not be requir'd of them instead of those they perform and believe ? And how can they be sure that they believe rightly any *unintelligible speculations* ? Here is foundation laid for nothing but endless scruples, doubts, and fears. Wherefore I conclude, that every one, out of regard to his own tranquillity of mind, which must be disturb'd as long as he has any seeds of *superstition*, is oblig'd to *think freely* on *matters of Religion*.

4thly. The infinite number of *pretenders*, in all ages to *revelations* from heaven, supported by miracles, containing new notions of the Deity, new
doctri-

* Clark's *Sermons* at Boyle's *Lecture*, vol. 1. p. 6.

† Mr Selden says, men look after Religion, as the butcher did after his knife, when he had it in his mouth. *Table-Talk*, p. 162.

*doctrines, new commands, new ceremonys, and new modes of worship, make thinking on the foregoing heads absolutely necessary. For how shall any man distinguish between the true messenger from heaven and the impostor, but by considering the evidence produc'd by the one, as freely as that of the other? Nay, a reverend Divine of our Church not only contends for free-thinking in this case, but goes further, and says, * Men are ever to be suspected, when they make extraordinary pretences. For, adds he, when Men pretend to work miracles, and talk of immediate revelations, of knowing the truth by inspiration, and of more than ordinary illumination; we ought not to be frighted with those big words from looking what is under them, nor to be afraid of calling those things into question, which are set off with such highflown pretences. From hence it has come to pass, that superstition and idolatry, enthusiasms and impostures, have so much prevail'd in the world. It is somewhat strange, that we should believe men the more, for that very reason upon which we should believe them the less.*

5thly. We have here in England a Society supported by the encouragement of her most excellent Majesty, and the contributions of many Divines and Ladies of our establish'd Church, in effect for the propagation of free-thinking in matters of Religion throughout the world; and whose design supposes that it is all mens duty to think freely about matters of Religion. For how can the society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts, hope, to have any effect on infidel Nations, without first acquainting them that it is their duty to think freely

* Clagets persuasive to an ingenuous Trial of Opinions.
p. 19.

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freely both on the notions of God and Religion, which they have receiv'd from their ancestors, or which are establish'd by law among them, and on those new notions of God and Religion brought to them by the Missionaries of the Church of England? Can it be suppos'd, that our Missionaries would begin with telling 'em, that they ought not to think freely of their own, or of our Religion; or that after they have by the means of free-thinking embrac'd our Religion, they ought then to cease from free-thinking? This were to proceed very inconsistently in the work of conversion, while no other arms but reason and evidence were made use of to convert. On the contrary, every Missionary must as a first principle insist on the duty of free-thinking, in order to be hearken'd to by them. Nay, should the King of Siam (or any other infidel Prince) in return for the favour of our endeavours to convert him and his kingdom to our Religion, desire to send us a pack of his Talapoins (so the priests of Siam are call'd) to convert us to the Religion by law establish'd in Siam; I cannot see but that our Society for propagating the Gospel, and all the contributors and well-wishers to it, must acknowledg this King's request to be highly reasonable, and perfectly of a piece with their own design; and particularly must allow to the King of Siam, that it is as much the duty of the members of the Church of England to think freely on what the missionary Talapoins shall propose to them, as it is the duty of the members of the Church of Siam to think freely on what shall be propos'd by the missionary priests of England. And therefore no doubt all they who sincerely desire the conviction of the Siamese, would give their Missionaries the same encouragement here, which we expect for

ours in Siam. The institution therefore of this *society* supposes *free-thinking* in *matters of Religion* to be the duty of all men on the face of the earth. And upon that account I cannot sufficiently commend the *Project*.

And oh ! that the proper persons were but employ'd for the execution of so glorious a work ! That such *zealous Divines* as our SACHEVERELS, our ATTERBURYS, our SMALRIDGES, our STUBS's, our HIGGINS's, our MILBURNS, and our SWIFTS, were drawn out annually, as our *military missionarys* are, to be sent into *foreign parts* to propagate the Gospel ! (a service in which such conscientious men must rejoice, since preaching the Gospel to *infidel nations* is no doubt contain'd in *Christ's commission*, whatever *haranguing upon a text* among Christians, by some call'd *preaching the Gospel*, may be) we might then hope to see blessed days, the *doctrine and discipline of the Church of England* triumph throughout the world, and *faction* cease at home ; as by the means of the *others* our arms triumph abroad, and we securely take our rest at night, and travel by day unmolested.

And no doubt likewise, but it would be as beneficial to the kingdom of *Siam*, to have a select number annually taken out of their *vast body of Talapoins*.

6thly. As there can be no reasonable change of opinions among men, no quitting of any old Religion, no reception of any new Religion, nor believing any Religion at all, but by means of *free-thinking* ; so the *holy scriptures*, agreeably to reason, and to the design of our *blessed Sa-*

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of FREE-THINKING. 35

viour of establishing his Religion throughout the whole universe, imply every where and press in many places the duty of *free-thinking*.

The design of the *Gospel* was, by preaching, to set all men upon *free-thinking*, that they might think themselves out of those notions of *God* and *Religion* which were every where *establish'd by law*, and receive an *unknown God* and an *unknown Religion* on the evidence the *Apostles*, or first messengers, produc'd to convince them. And accordingly the *Apostles* requir'd nothing to be receiv'd on their authority, without an antecedent proof given of that authority. St. PAUL even in his *Epistles*, which are all written to men who were already *Christians*, offers many arguments for their confirmation in the *true faith*, with respect to all the parts of the *Christian Religion*. Whereby he made them, and all his readers for ever, judges of their force: for whoever reasons, lays aside all authority, and endeavours to force your assent by argument alone. St. PAUL likewise went frequently into the *synagogues* of the *Jews* and *reason'd with them*, & *into the market places at Athens* where he *disputed* with the *devout* people he met with; which was not only putting the *Jews* and *Heathens* upon *free-thinking* in *matters of Religion*, but taking (according to the present *notions* and *practice* of *Christians*) a very extraordinary step to put them upon *free-thinking*. For should WILLIAM PENN the *Quaker*, or any other *Religious person* differing from the *establish'd Church*, come to St. Paul's during the time of *Divine service*, to *reason* with the *Court of Aldermen*, *Preacher*, and *Singing-Men*, or go into the *markets* of *London* to *dispute* with the *devout butchers* & *herb-women*; or Mr. WHISTON into the *Lower House of Convocation*,

Acts 17. 2.

3. 17.

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to reason with the Members: it is certain, that pursuant to the false notions which now universally prevail, the one would be treated as a madman and fanatick, and the other as a disturber of the proceedings of the Holy Synod, which assumes a right to determine, without reasoning with the Person whose opinions they condemn.

Our Saviour, particularly commands us to search the scriptures, that is, to endeavour to find out their true meaning. And for fear we should surrender our judgments to our fathers, and mothers, or Church-rulers, or Preachers, he bids us take heed what we hear, and whom we hear, and to beware of their doctrine. And, why, says he, even of your selves judg ye not what is right? If a man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple. And he commanded his own disciples not to be call'd Rabbi nor masters; by which last words our learned commentator, the reverend * Dr. WHITBY, understands, That we should call no man guide, or master upon earth, no Fathers, no Church, no Council. And indeed whoever considers, that all the priests upon earth were enemys to our blessed Saviour and his Gospel, and that he, giving the privilege of infallibility to no body besides his holy Apostles, could not be secure that any priests, except his own dozen, would ever be otherwise; I say, he who considers this, can never think it possible for CHRIST to give so partial a command, as to contain a reserve in behalf of any other set of priests, in prejudice of the general rules of free-thinking, on which the Gospel was to be built, and which he so particularly laid down and inculcated.

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7ly. The *conduct* of the *priests*, who are the chief pretenders to be guides to others in *matters of Religion*, makes *free-thinking* on the *nature and attributes of the eternal being or God*, on the *authority of scriptures*, and on the *sense of scriptures*, unavoidable. And to prove this, I will give you an induction of several particulars of their *conduct*.

1st. It is well known that the *priests* throughout the universe, are endlessly divided in opinion about *all these matters*; and their variety of opinions is so great, as not possibly to be collected together; nay, even those kinds of *priests*, with which we are more nearly concern'd, differ so much one from another on some of these *heads*, that it would be an impossible *task* to give you all their differences. I shall therefore out of this vast and spacious field select such under *each of these heads*, as is most proper to affect us *Englishmen*.

(1) As to the *nature of the eternal being or God*, the antient and modern *Pagan priests* had and have as many different Ideas of the Deity, as wit, or interest, or folly can invent; and even the *Christian priests* have been always, and still are, divided in their notions of a Deity. Almost all the antient *priests* and fathers (who were most of them *priests*) of the *Christian Church* conceiv'd * God to be material; and several an-

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tient

* Quis enim negabit, says *Tertullian*, Deum corpus esse etsi spiritus est? Spiritus enim corpus sui generis in sua effigie. Sed et invisibilia illa, quæcunque sunt, habent apud Deum, et suum corpus et suam formam, per quæ soli Deo visibilia sunt; quanto magis quod ex ipsius substantiâ missum est sine substantiâ non erit?
Cap.

tient *Christian priests* of Egypt were so gross, as to conceive him to be in the shape of a man, and from thence were call'd *Anthropomorphites*. Most of the modern *priests* contend that God is *immaterial*, but they differ in their notion of *immateriality*; some by *immaterial* being understanding * *extended substance without solidity*; † others by *immaterial* being understanding *unextended being*.

If any regard is to be had to the malicious books and sayings of *priests* one against another, several of them make the *material Universe* to be the *eternal being* or God, wherein consists the *essence of Atheism*.

The reverend ‡ Mr. WILLIAM CARROL has wrote several books to prove the reverend Dr. CLARK and the reverend Mr. SAMUEL BOLD *Atheists* in that sense.

The reverend ** Mr. TURNER charges the
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Cap. 7. contr. *Praxeam*. By which passage the reader may see that *Spiritus* and *Invisibilis* had not the same sense among the *Fathers* which they have among the modern *Divines* and *Philosophers*, but were words apply'd to that kind of Matter of which they suppos'd God and the Souls of men consisted, in opposition to that gross matter, of which the earth or our bodies consist. And consequently that the *Fathers* maintain'd God to be material, when they us'd words which now signify quite the contrary.

* Dr. More in his *Div. Dial*, and *Enchirid*. *Metaph. Glanvil* in *Saild. Triumph*. Turner of the *Divine Extension*, in an *Appendix* to his *Disc. of the Messiah*; and Dr. Clark in his *Four Letters* about the *Immateriality* of the Soul.

† The Body of *Priests*.

‡ *Remarks* on *Clark's Sermons*, 4to. *Defence of Remarks*, 4to. *Dissertation* against *Locke*, 8vo.

** *Disc. of the Messiah*, *Epist*, *Ded.* p. 17, 18.

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reverend Dr. CUDWORTH with *Atheism*. for his *Intellectual system of the Universe*. And a great Prelate must suppose *Atheism* very far spread among the *priests*, when he said, † *It was a great providence of God that so many of the Clergy swore to the government (under King WILLIAM and Queen MARY) lest the Church should be destroy'd: And it was the same providence of God that so many of the Clergy refus'd the oath, lest people should think that there was no such thing as Religion, and incline to Atheism.*

As the *Christian priests* differ about the *Nature or Essence of God*, so they are infinitely more divided in their notions about his *Attributes*. The whole difference between the *Arminians* and *Calvinists* is founded on different notions of the attributes of God; and this Dispute is kept up in most *Christian Churches* on the face of the earth. It is carry'd on in the *Romish Church* under the names of *Jansenists* and *Jesuits*, *Thomists* and *Molinists*, &c. It has been for near a century last past debated among the divines of our *Church*, and is at this day between the reverend Dr. WHITBY and his adversaries. Indeed the differences among the *priests* in every Church about the *Attributes of God* are as numerous as the *priests* who treat of the *divine attributes*; not one agreeing with another in his notions of them all. So that we may say of them what CICERO said, of some of the antient Philosophers in the like case, * *that those*
among

† *Notes on the Pastoral Letter*, p. 51.

* *Qui Deos esse dixerunt tantâ sunt in varietate & dissensione constituti, ut eorum molestum sit annumerare sententias. Alterum fieri profecto potest, ut eorum nulla: alterum certè non potest, ut plus una vera sit. Cicero de nat. Deor. lib. 1.*

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among them who maintaind the existence of Gods had so many & so different opinions from one another, that it would be difficult to enumerate them all; and that perhaps not one of those opinions may be true, and that undoubtedly more than one cannot be so. I will therefore close this matter with one Instance of a most remarkable Difference.

It is the opinion of many Divines, that when the scriptures attribute hands and eyes, and feet, and face to *God*, we are not to understand that *God* really has those parts, but only that he has a power to execute all those actions, to the effecting of which those parts are necessary in us. And when the scriptures attribute such passions to *God*, as anger, pleasure, love, hatred, repentance, revenge, and the like; the meaning is, that he will as certainly punish the wicked, as if he was inflam'd with the passion of anger; that he will as infallibly reward the good, as if he had a love for them; and that when men turn from their wickedness, he will suit dispensations to them, as if he really repented or chang'd his mind: So that these scripture-attributes belong not to *God* in a proper and just sense, but only improperly, or as the *schools* speak, *analogically*. But when the scripture attributes to *God* an understanding, wisdom, will, goodness, holiness, justice and truth, these words are to be understood strictly and properly, or in their common sense. Dr. TILLOTSON, the late Archbishop of *Canterbury*, throughout his works maintains this *system of the Deity*. I need only cite his words with respect to those attributes last mention'd; his notions, with respect to parts or

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passions in God, being sufficiently known without any proof. He says, * *It is foolish for any man to pretend he cannot know what justice, and goodness, and truth in God are; for if we do not know this, it is all one to us whether God be good or not, nor could we imitate his goodness; for he that imitates, endeavours to make himself like something that he knows, and must of necessity have some idea of that to which he aims to be like. So that if we had no certain and settled notion of the goodness, and justice, and truth of God, he would be altogether an unintelligible being; and Religion, which consists in the imitation of him, would be utterly lost. Thus that Religious and free-thinking Prelate. But on the other side, Dr. KING the present Archbishop of Dublin tells us, † That the best representations we can make of God, are infinitely short of truth; That wisdom, understanding, and mercy, P. 7. 8. foreknowledg, predestination, and will, when ascrib'd to God, are not to be taken properly. Again, that justice and virtue (and by consequence P. 34. 35. all the moral attributes of God) are not to be understood to signify the same thing when apply'd to God and man; and that they are of so different a nature from what they are in us, and so superior to all that we can conceive, that there is no more likeness between them, than between our hand and God's power. But all these attributes, according to his Grace, are to be understood in the same manner, as when men ascribe hands, P. 6. and eyes, and feet to God; or as when men ascribe anger, love, hatred, revenge, repentance, changing resolutions, and in the same improper analogical sense. So that as his Grace of Canterbury*

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would

* *Sermons*, vol. 6, p. 15, 16.

† *Sermon on Divine predest.* p. 16.

would define God to be a *being without parts and passions, holy, wise, just, true, and good*; his Grace of Dublin must on the contrary define God to be a *being not only without parts and passions, but without understanding, wisdom, will, mercy, holiness, goodness, and truth.*

2dly. The *priests* throughout the world differ about *scriptures*, and the *authority of scriptures*. The * *Bramins* have a book of *scripture* call'd the *Shaster*. The *Persees* have their *Zundavaftaw*. The *Bonzes* of *China* have books written by the † *Disciples of FO-HE*, whom they call the ‡ *God and Saviour of the world, who was born to teach the way of salvation, and to give satisfaction for all mens sins*. The *Talapoins* of *Siam* have a book of *scripture* written by § *SOMMONOCODOM*, who, the *Siamese* say, was ¶ *born of a Virgin*, and was † *the God expected by the universe*. The *Dervizes* have their *Alchoran*. The *Rabbis* among the *Samaritans*, receive the *five books of MOSES* (the copy whereof is very different from ours) as their *scripture*; together with a *Chronicon*, or *history* of themselves from *MOSES's* time, quite different from that contain'd in the *historical books of the Old Testament*. This ‡ *Chronicon* is lodg'd in the publick library of *Leyden*, and has never been

* *Lord's Religion of the Banians and Persees.*

† *Navarette's Voyages*, p. 86.

‡ *Salvator Generis Humani. Conf. Sin. Phil. Proem. Diff.* p. 28.

Le Dieu Fo-he a été le Sauveur du monde. Il est né pour enseigner le voye du salut, & pour expier pour tous les péchez. Le Comté, vol. 2. p. 132.

§ *Tachard Voyage de Siam*, vol. I. p. 408.

¶ *Vol. 2. p. 253.*

† *Le Dieu attendu de l'univers. Id. p. 254. 255.*

‡ *Relandi Differ. vol. 2. p. 16.*

been publish'd in print. The *Rabbis* among the common herd of *Jews* receive for scripture the *four and twenty books* of the *Old Testament*. The *priests* of the *Roman Church*, of the *English* and other *Protestant Churches*, receive for scripture the *four and twenty books* of the *Old Testament*, and all the *books of the New Testament*: but the *Romish* receive several other *books*, call'd *Apocrypha*, as *canonical*, which all the *Protestant Churches* utterly reject, except the *Church of England*; which, differently from all other *Christian Churches*, receives them as *half canonical*, reading some parts of them in their *Churches*, and thereby excluding some chapters of *canonical scripture* from being read.

I must observe, That the *priests* of all *Christian Churches* differ among themselves in each *Church* about the *copys* of the *same books of scripture*; some reading them according to one *manuscript*, and others according to *another*. But the great dispute of all, is concerning the *Hebrew* and *Septuagint*, between which two there is a great difference; (the latter making the world 1500. years older than the former) to name no other *differences* of greater or less importance.

Lastly, As the most ancient *Christian Churches* and *priests* receiv'd several *Gospels* and *books of scripture* which are now lost, such as * *the Gospel according to the Hebrews*, *the Gospel according to the Egyptians*, *the Traditions of Matthias*, &c. and as not one *Father* in the two first centuries (whose works now remain) but receiv'd *books of scripture*, which are either lost to us, or that we reject as *Apocryphal*: so the several *sects* of *Christians*

* *Millii Proleg. in Nov. Test.*, p. 5. 6. 7.

tians in the *East* and in *Africa* receive at this day *some books of scripture*, which are so far lost to us, that we know only their names, and others which we have and reject. As for instance, the reverend Dr. GRABE tells us of a book receiv'd by the † *Copticks*, call'd the *Secrets of PETER*, of which we have no copy; and * *LUDOLPHUS* tells us, That the *Abyssinian Christians* receive the *Apostolick Constitutions*; and † *POSTELLUS* brought from the *East*, where it was in use, the *Gospel of JAMES*: both which we reject as *Apo-cryphal*.

The same *books of scripture* have, among those *priests* who receive them, a very different degree of authority; some attributing more, and others less authority to them. The *Popish priests* contend that the *text of scripture* is so corrupted, precarious, and unintelligible, that we are to depend on the authority of their Church for the true particulars of the Christian Religion. Others who contend for a greater perfection in the *text of scripture*, differ about the inspiration of those books; some contending that every thought and word are inspir'd; some that the thoughts are inspir'd, and not the words; some that those thoughts only are inspir'd, which relate to fundamentals; and others that the books were written by honest men with great care and faithfulness, without any inspiration either with respect to the thoughts or words.

In like manner, the *Bramins*, *Persees*, *Bonzes*, *Talapoins*, *Dervizes*, *Rabbis*, and all other *Priests* who

† *Spicileg. Secul.* 1. p. 73.

* *Hist. Æthiop.* l. 3. c. 4. §. 27.

† *Fabricii Codex Apocr.* p. 48.

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who build their Religion on books, must from the nature of things vary about books in the same Religion, about the *inspiration*, and *copies* of those books.

3dly. The *priests* differ about the sense and meaning of those books they receive as *sacred*. This is evident from the great number of *sects* in each Religion, founded on the diversity of senses put on their several *scriptures*. And tho the books of the *Old and New Testament* are the immediate dictates of God himself, and all other *scriptures* are the books of *Impostors*; yet are the *priests* of the Christian Church (like the *priests* of all other Churches) not only divided into numberless *sects*, on account of their different interpretations of *them*, but even the *priests* of the same *sect* differ endlessly in opinion about their sense and meaning.

To set this matter before you in the clearest manner, and to possess you with the justest idea of the differences among *priests* about the sense and meaning of their *scriptures*, and to make my argument the stronger for the *duty* and *necessity* of *free-thinking*, I will confine my self to the *most* *divine* of all *books*, and by consequence the best adapted of any to prevent diversity of opinions; and will take the following method.

First, I will give you an idea of the *nature* of our *holy books*; whereby you'll see the *foundation* therein laid for a diversity of opinions among the *priests* of the Christian Church.

And, *secondly*, I will give you a specimen of the diversity of opinions, among the *priests* of the

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the Church of *England*, pretended to be deduc'd from them : for all *their* differences are too great to be enumerated. From whence you'll easily infer, that there must be an infinite number of opinions among all other sorts of *priests*, as to the meaning of their *scriptures*; since the *most* divine of all *books* lays such a foundation for difference of opinion, that *priests* of the same *sect* are not able to agree, tho neither *art*, nor *force*, nor *interest* are wanting to compel them to agreement in opinion.

First, As to an idea of the *nature* of our *holy books*, I will not pretend to so much divine knowledg as to draw their *character* my self; and therefore take the following account of them from the *right* reverend Bishop TAYLOR, a Prelate well known for his learned *defence* of the *divine Right of Episcopacy*, his *Life of the blessed JESUS*, and many *books of devotion*; as likewise for his suffering for the Church of *England* and *Royal Family*, during the late *civil wars*. This Religious Prelate tells us, * 1. That there are innumerable places of the *scriptures* containing in them great *mysteries*, but yet are so enwrap'd in a cloud, or so darkned with umbrages, or heighten'd with expressions, or so cover'd with allegories and garments of *rhetorick*, so profound in the matter, or so intricate in the manner, in the clothing and the dressing, that God may seem to have left them as trials of our *Industry*, and arguments of our imperfections, and as occasions of our *charity* and toleration to each other, and *humility* in our selves, rather than as repositories of *faith*, and furniture of *creeds* and articles of belief. 2. He says, That there are so many thousand copies of the

P. 966.

* Polemick Works, p. 905.

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the scriptures, which were writ by persons of such different interests and persuasions, such different understandings and tempers, such distinct abilities and weaknesses, that there is great variety of readings, both in the Old and New Testament. 3. That there are many places of scripture which have a double sense, a literal and a spiritual: and both these senses are subdivided: for the literal sense is natural or figurative; and the spiritual is sometimes allegorical, sometimes anagogical, nay, sometimes there are divers literal senses in the same sentence. 4. That there are divers places of scripture containing in them great mysteries, and questions of great concernment; and yet the fabrick and constitution of them is such, that there is no certain mark to determine whether the sense of them should be literal or figurative. 5. That there are some places of scripture which have the self-same expressions, the same preceptive words, the same reason and account in all appearance; and yet must be expounded to quite different senses. 6. That some points of scripture are so mysterious, that they are only to be understood by persons very holy and spiritual. 7. That all systems of science are so express'd, that either by reason of the universality of the terms and subject matter, or by the infinite variety of human understandings, they seem to divers men, nay to the same men upon different occasions, to speak things extremely disparate, and sometimes contrary, but very often of great variety. And this very thing happens also in scripture, that if it were not in re seria & sacra, it were excellent sport to observe how the same place of scripture serves several turns upon occasion. 8. That the scriptures are so wrote, as not certainly to be understood by considering the context and connexion of the parts. For when there are two or three antece-

P. 967.

P. 969.

P. 970.

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precedents and subjects spoken of, what rule shall ascertain me that I make my reference true, by drawing the relation to such an antecedent? For in a contexture where one part does not always depend upon another, where things of different natures intervene and interrupt the first intentions; there expounding scripture by the context is not always a very probable method to find out the true meaning.

9. That comparing of places is another great pretence to fix the sense of scripture; but comparing of places is of so indefinite capacity, that if there be ambiguity of words, variety of sense, alteration of circumstances, or difference of stile among divine writers, then there is nothing that may be more abus'd by wilful people, or may more easily deceive the unwary, or that may more amuse the most intelligent observer.

10. That the scriptures are pretended to be expounded by analogy of reason; but unless there were some *Intellectus Universalis* furnish'd with infallible propositions, by referring to which, every one might argue infallibly this logic may deceive as well as any of the rest. For it is with mens reason as with mens tastes, &c.

11. That others pretend to expound scripture by the analogy of faith: But that is a chimera, a thing in nubibus, which varies like the right hand and left hand of a pillar.

12. Lastly, that consulting originals is thought a great matter in the interpretation of scripture. But the difficulty is in the thing however express'd, the least in the language. The inspection of the original is no more certain way of interpretation now, than it was in the primitive ages of the Church, when there was an infinite variety of translations of the Bible, and never a one like another.

2dly. I now proceed to give a specimen of the
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diversity of opinions of the *priests* of the Church of England, all pretended to be deduc'd from the *Scriptures*.

I. The most fundamental Doctrine of the whole *Christian Religion*, is the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity: And yet what different notions of the Trinity do the *priests* pretend to deduce from *Scripture*?

Some make the *orthodox doctrine* to consist in * *three distinct, eternal, perfectly equal beings, agreeing in a specifick unity*; in conformity with the *orthodox priests* of the *fourth century*, and particularly St. ATHANASIUS, who says, † *The Persons of the Trinity are one God, as PETER, PAUL, and TIMOTHY are one man.*

Some ‡ maintain *three distinct, eternal, equal beings, whose unity is partly numerical and partly specifick.*

Some § maintain *three distinct, eternal, unequal beings, the first whereof is alone self-existent, and the second and third subordinate.* And these again are subdivided; some of them making the *son* and *holy ghost* to flow from the *father* by an inherent necessity of nature, and others to be the effect of a *voluntary operation* of the *father*.

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Some

* Braddock's *Doctrine of the Fathers*, &c. part. 1.

† *Athanasii Opera*. Ed. Par. vol. 2. p. 160.

‡ Sherlock's *Vind. of the Trinity*, and its *Defence*.

§ *Evangelist*'s 23 propos. *Bulli Defens. Fid. Nic. Cudworth's Intell. Syst.* *Payne's Sermons*, and *Letter to the Bishop of Roch.* And *Dr. Clarke's Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*.

Some (a) make the *Persons* to be *eternal modes of subsistence*, or *internal relations of the one substance of the Deity to it self*. And pursuant to this *hypothesis*, they say, (b) *That the whole Deity was incarnate in the man Christ, but not wholly*.

Some (c) make the *Persons* to be *external relations of the one substance of the Deity to mankind*, viz. *Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier*; as *King WILLIAM was King of England, France, and Ireland*. Again, the same *reverend person* makes each *Person* a *third of God*, as (d) *length, breadth, and thickness make a cube*; or as (e) *three groats make a shilling, and three nobles make a pound*.

Some (f) make the *Trinity* to consist in a *mind that from all eternity had wisdom, that from all eternity understood himself, and from all eternity loved himself*.

Lastly, Others (g) receive the words of the *Athanasian Creed* without any sense or explication at all, conceiving the *article of faith* to lie in something *unintelligible*.

2. The *priests* dispute, *Whether the doctrine of the Trinity be a fundamental and necessary article of the Christian faith* or no. Dr. SOUTH affirms,

a Dr. South's *Animad. and Tritheism charg'd*.

b South's *Tritheism charg'd*, p. 62.

c Wallis's *Letters of the Trinity*. Lett. 3. p. 40, 41.

d First Lett. p. 11.

e Third Lett. p. 42.

f Nye's *Institutions of the Trinity*.

g Gastrel's *Consid. on the Trinity*.

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affirms, * *A man can no more be a Christian without the belief of the Trinity, than he can be a man without a rational soul.* And our right reverend Bishop † BULL has written a book against EPISCOPUS and others, to prove the necessity of believing the Trinity and Incarnation. Indeed the greater number of priests are in that sentiment. For as the right reverend ‡ Bishop TAYLOR observes, *The example of so excellent a man as ATHANASIUS in his Creed, has been follow'd with too much greediness; all the world in factions all damning one another, each party damn'd by all the rest; and there is no disagreement in opinion, but damnation presently to all who disagree.*

But this Religious Prelate is not himself of that opinion. He says, *If it be consider'd how many people understand not the Athanasian Creed, how contrary to natural reason it seems, how little the scripture says of those curiosities of explication, how tradition is not clear on ATHANASIUS's side for the article it self, how ATHANASIUS is put to it to make an answer and excuse for the fathers who express'd themselves like Arians, how the Arians appeal'd to the fathers for trial, and the offer was declin'd, it had not been amiss if the final judgment had been left to Christ, who is appointed judg of all men, and who will judg them righteously; for he knows every truth, the degree of every necessity, and all excuses that do lessen the nature and malice of a sin: all wick ATHANASIUS, tho a very good man, did not know so well as to warrant such a sentence.* And Bishop TAYLOR concludes, *That it is very strange*

P. 963.

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* Ded. Epist. to Trinit. charg'd.

† De Necessit. credendi, &c.

‡ Polemick Works, p. 904.

to

to put uncharitableness into a Creed, and make it an Article of faith.

Dr. WALLIS takes a different method from Bishop TAYLOR, tho he agrees with him in his conclusion. He says, * *The damnatory sentences in the Athanasian Creed are not to be understood according to the rigour.*

And many other Divines contend, that the *damnatory sentences are no part of the Creed*, which consists only in believing the Article of the Trinity as there express'd.

3. The † *priests* of our Church dispute, whether at the *resurrection* men shall have a body consisting of the same numerical particles of matter that were laid in the grave: Whether they shall have a body consisting of the same numerical particles of matter that have been some time or other vitally united to the soul during the life of the man: Whether they shall have a body consisting of particles of matter that were never united to the soul during the life of the man: whether they shall not have a body consisting of any particles of matter indifferently: and lastly, whether they shall rise with a body or no.

4. Our *priests* at, and for many years after the Reformation, were generally *Calvinists* or *Predestinarians*, as is evident, from the ‡ *Articles of the Church*; from the § *Bibles* printed in Queen ELIZABETH'S time, to which are often

* *Second Letter*, p. 1.

† *See their numerous Sermons on Easter-Day.*

‡ *Art. 10, & 17.*

§ *In several editions printed by C. Barker the Queen's Printer.*

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often annex'd an *Apology for Predestination*, answering the common objections made by *Atheists, Deists, Socinians and Libertins*, against that saving doctrine of the Gospel; from the * *Suffrage of the Divines of Great Britain deliver'd by them to the Synod of Dort*, March 16. 1619. as the sense of the Church of England; where the five points (as they are call'd) are all determin'd on the Calvinistical side, agreeable to the decisions of that holy Synod: and lastly, from all their books till the time of Bishop LAUD. In which time was made the grand change among our priests; and there are now at least nine parts in ten of the priests who preach every Sunday contrary to the Articles they have subscrib'd. So true are the observations of Bishop TAYLOR and Mr. WHISTON; the first whereof says, † That there is no Church which is in prosperity, but alters her doctrine every age, either by bringing in new doctrines or contradicting the old; which shows that none are satisfy'd with themselves or with their own confessions: And the latter, ‡ That there is scarce any one clergyman of the Church that has consider'd and examin'd things with care, who believes all the Thirty nine Articles, in their proper and original meaning. However, the orthodoxy of Queen ELIZABETH'S time is not quite extinguish'd. We have had our PRIDEAUX'S and our JANE'S, both Professors of the divinity-chair in Oxford; our CARLTONS and our DAVENANTS both Bishops; and have now our SOUTHS and our EDWARDS'S of Oxford and Cambridge; and several

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others

* Printed in Eng. anno 1629. 4to. and in the *Acta Dordracensia*.

† Ded. before *Liberty of Prophecy*.

‡ *Essays*, p. 238.

others who appear in behalf of our old Religion, against the numerous *innovators* among the clergy. The two last mention'd Divines have with great zeal (but it must be confess'd very weakly) lately attack'd the reverend Dr. W H I T B Y, who in many late books has show'd himself a *zealous Arminian*. I must not omit doing justice to that profound and orthodox Prelate the present Bishop of London, whom many have often heard with satisfaction inculcate the doctrine of *predestination* in his excellent sermons.

5. Our priests dispute whether *Hell-torments* are eternal or no; and some of the most eminent either doubt of their *eternity*, or plainly deny them to be *eternal*. The famous Divine and Philosopher * Dr. HENRY MORE says, The words *Αἰών* and *Αἰώνιος* in scripture are indifferent to signify either that which is properly everlasting, or that which lasts a long time; so that we are not able to pronounce for the eternity or perpetuity of *Hell-torments*. Again, That *comminations* are not, tho' promises be obligatory; forasmuch as in *comminations* the comminator is the creditor, and he that is menaced the Debtor that owes the punishment; but in promises he that promiseth becomes the debtor and he to whom the promise is made, creditor. Whence the promiser is plainly oblig'd to make good his promise, as being the debtor: But the comminator, as being the creditor, is not oblig'd to exact the punishment; it being in the power of any creditor to remit the debt owing to him if he will. Wherefore in this *commination* of eternal fire or everlasting punishment, tho' *Αἰώνιος* signify here properly everlasting, as well as in everlasting life, yet because this latter is a promise,

and

* Annotations on Lux Orientalis, p. 73. 74.

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and the other only a commination, it does not follow, that as surely as the righteous shall be rewarded with everlasting life, so surely shall the wicked be punish'd with everlasting fire in the most proper and highest extent of the signification of the word. Because God in his comminations to the wicked is only a creditor, and has still a right and power to remit either part or the whole debt; but to the righteous, by virtue of his promise, he becomes a debtor, and cannot recede, but must punctually keep his word.

To the same purpose and after the same manner speaks the most pious and rational Dr. TILLOTSON, in his celebrated *Sermon of hell-torments*. And Dr. HICKES mentions * *five or six Divines, most of whom are in great stations of the Church, as converts to this opinion by a manuscript treatise written by an old sceptick (so he calls the reverend Mr. WHITEFOOT) at Norwich.*

6. Our *priests* dispute whether the *sabbath* or the *Lord's-day* ought to be kept *holy*.

From the Reformation to the reign of King JAMES I, *England* was as remarkable for its religious observation of the *Lord's-day* as *Scotland* is at present. And I can meet with no publick remarkable instance of the breach of that *holy day*, during the long reign of Queen ELIZABETH, unless at † the Bishop of London's house in *Fulham*, where his Lordship and others (I suppose his chaplains) used to play at bowls on *sunday*. But King JAMES pub-

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lish'd

* *Discourses on Tillotson and Burnet, p. 46.*

† *Strype's Life of Aylmer, p. 215, 294.*

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lish'd a *proclamation* for sports on that holy day obliging all ministers to read it in their Churches. And * several *priests* in his reign, and that of his successor CHARLES I. (whether in compliance with the profaneness of the court, I shall not determine) wrote books to shew that *sunday was no sabbath*, and that there was no *morality* in observing the *Lord's-day*: all which were answer'd and refuted by several other godly and orthodox Divines. Nor is this controversy yet bury'd; for very lately a high and reverend † *priest* has wrote for the lawfulness of sports on that *holy day*.

7. Our *priests* dispute whether *Episcopacy* be of *divine* or *human* institution; a *question* which, according to most of them, concerns the *very essence* of the *Church*.

That the latter was the opinion of our Church (and of course once the opinion of many *priests*) from the Reformation, to the Restoration of King CHARLES II. is evident; for as a *noble Peer* observ'd in a ‡ *speech* made in the *House of Lords*, *Presbyterian Ordination* was allow'd and practis'd in the Church from the beginning of the Reformation till the *Act of Uniformity* (which allow'd of no Ordination but *Episcopal*) and several *Bishops* were made of such as were never ordain'd *priests* by *Bishops*. But yet some § *few priests* before the Restoration, and more since, have wrote for the *divine right of Episcopacy*; and 'tis now become a considerable squabble in the *Church*. There are not only *priests* on both sides

* *Prideaux, Brevewood, White, Heylin, Dowe, Pocklington, Mede, &c.*

† *Morer on the Name, Notion, &c. of the Sabbath.*

‡ *State-Tracts*, p. 50.

§ *Bishops Hall and Taylor, &c.*

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sides of the question, but one eminent *priest*, Dr. STILLINGFLEET, is himself on both sides; when he was a *presbyter*, he wrote a * *book* to prove the *human institution of Episcopacy*; and when he was a *Bishop*, he † wrote to prove it of *divine institution*. Just like AYLMER Bishop of London, who before he was made Bishop thought ‡ the *lands of the clergy ought to be given to Queen ELIZABETH to maintain her wars against France and Spain*; but when he was a *Bishop*, he apply'd to himself these words, *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child.*

8. The doctrine of *original sin*, and whether men are now liable to be damn'd for ADAM's sin (which is the foundation of the whole *Christian Religion*) was formerly disputed between § Bishop TAYLOR and the Bishop of Rochester; and is at this day between the reverend Dr. WHITBY and the reverend Dr. EDWARDS of *Jesus-College in Oxford*.

9. Whether our *Saviour's* soul existed in heaven before his incarnation, was lately debated between Dr. FOWLER the present Bishop of Gloucester, and Dr. SHERLOCK, who have each of them had other *priests* for their *seconds*.

10. Lay-baptism was expressly allow'd of in the *Rubrick* of our *Liturgy*, just before the *Office of private baptism*, till JAMES I's reign, in these words: *Let those that are present at the baptism call*
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* *Ironicum.*

† *Charge to his Clergy*, in 1690.

‡ *Aylmer's Life* by Strype. p. 225, 268, 269.

§ *Polemick Works*, p. 863.

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upon God, and say the Lord's prayer, if the time will suffer. And then one of them shall name the child, and dip him in the water, or pour water upon him, saying in these words, I baptize thee, &c. And as far as my knowledg in the priests books reaches, the validity of Lay-baptism was a settled point among the best Church-men till very lately. For I find the reverend Mr. SEL-
LERS (who was so high & good a Churchman as to be a Jacobite separatist) affirming, * That the baptism administer'd in sport by A THANASIUS when he was a Heathen school-boy, to his Heathen playfellows, was valid and not to be reiterated, as was defin'd by ALEXANDER then Patriarch of Alexandria, and oppos'd by no other part of the Church. But of late many censures have been pass'd on the Bishop of Sarum, and books written against him by priests, for asserting, † That faith in the Trinity gives every man a right to baptism; and that this has been the constant sense of the Church for above 1400 years: which in a ritual matter is certainly of great authority. They reckon'd that baptism was the gift of Christ to his Church, when given in the name of the father, son, and holy Ghost. It is Christ's baptism, be they who give it orthodox or hereticks, clergy or laity; and in the latter ages, men or women.

II. The reverend Mr. BLAXTON has collected the ‡ Opinions of the most learned and famous Divines of the Church of England from the Reformation to the year 1634. all condemning Usury as unlawful and forbidden by God's word. To which

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* Remarks on J. H's View of Antiquity, p. 380, 381.

† Two Sermons printed in 1710.

‡ Printed anno 1634.

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I could add a great many more who have follow'd our primitive clergy in this point, and easily make Mr. BLAXTON's Book as big as the *History of Passive-obedience*. I will only throw in the opinion of that great *casuist* and profound Divine, Bishop SANDERSON, who makes * *six in the hundred to be sabbath-breaking, and every one that takes lawful interest for his money to be guilty of the breach of all the ten commandments; and particularly of the fourth, because the plough goes on sundays*. And even our *Lay ancestors* were so blind as not to see the plain design of the *priests* (who by making money usefess in the hands of the *Laity* knew where it would be bestow'd) and had their heads so turn'd by their sermons and books on that subject, that in an *Act of Parliament* made in the 13th. year of Queen Elizabeth, to reduce interest to ten per cent, it is asserted, *that all Usury being forbidden by the law of God is sin and detestable*: And in another *Act* made the 21st. of James I. to reduce interest to eight per cent. there are these words at the end of the said *Act*, viz. *Provided, that no words in this law contain'd shall be construed or expounded to allow the practice of Usury in point of Religion or conscience*. But our *priests* are now almost universally chang'd in this matter: and I have not heard of any one of late, except the reverend Mr. DAVID JONES, who takes *Usury* to be a sin. On the contrary, it ought to be suppos'd that they now account it a *Christian virtue*, since there are so many among 'em who are *common stock-jobbers* on the *Change*, and who act the part of *Attorneys* and *Scriveners* in their parishes, in placing out money on securitys at interest.

12. They dispute whether men are to be of the *priests Religion*, or the *Magistrates*, or are to *judg for themselves*. In the reign of CHARLES II. (that King after their own heart) their leader Dr. PARKER said, * *That in cases and disputes of a publick concern, private men have no power over their own actions, they are not to be directed by their own judgments, or determin'd by their own wills; but by the commands and determinations of the publick conscience or magistrate. And if there is any sin in the command, he that impos'd it shall answer for't.* Again, *That in all disputable cases it is better to err with authority, that is, with the Magistrates, than to be in the right against it.* But since the magistrate has laid aside all claim to dominion over mens minds and consciences, by ceasing to fine and imprison men on the score of Religion, and by granting a Toleration; they † now set up the *authority of the priest* (which they call *the Church*) and make the magistrate himself, who is by law *the supreme governour in all causes and over all persons, as well ecclesiastical as civil*, the *priests ecclesiastical subject* as well as the rest of the *laity*. Some few, such as Mr. CHILLINGWORTH, Dr. TILLOTSON, and others now living, have clearly asserted the right of all men to judg for themselves.

I could proceed to give an account how they dispute about the *priests power to absolve men from their sins*, about the *independency of the Church on the state*, about the *sacrament being a proper sacrifice*, about the *real presence in the sacrament*, about the *priests of the Christian Church being proper priests*; and indeed about every point in the

* *Eccles. Polity*, p. 308.

† *Hickes, Lesley, &c.*

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the whole Christian Religion, & about the meaning of every *article* of their own Church, as well as about the meaning of almost every *Text* in the *Bible* : but what I have produc'd being sufficient to prove their *divisions* about the meaning of the Scripture in matters of the greatest importance, I may justly conclude that it is necessary for every man, instead of relying upon them, to *think freely* for himself; and proceed to the second instance of their conduct.

2dly. A second instance of their conduct, whereby they make *free-thinking* unavoidable, is, their owning in express words the *doctrines* of the Church to be contradictory to one another, and to reason.

The renowned Dr. SACHEYEREL says in P. 257. fol. his speech at his Tryal, that by abandoning *Passive-obedience*, the distinguishing badg and glory of our Reformation, we must render our selves the most inconsistent Church in the world. By which words the doctor must suppose, even before the sentence pass'd upon him condemning the doctrine of *Passive-obedience*, that many doctrines of the Church were inconsistent and contradictory to one another; otherwise one inconsistency more would not make it the most inconsistent Church in the world.

Dr. BEVERIDGE supposes our whole faith in God to consist of contradictions to reason, when he says, * *That is most true of God which seems most impossible to us.*

Dr. SOUTH, speaking of Christ's incarnation, says,

* Private Thoughts, p. 52.

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says, † To behold the Divinity which is present to all places, cloth'd in flesh, is as if we should imagine not only the whole world represented upon, but also contain'd in one of our little artificial globes, or the body of the sun envelop'd in a cloud as big as a man's hand; all which would be look'd on as astonishing impossibilitys: and yet as far short of the other, as the greatest finite is of an infinite, between which the disparity is unmeasurable. For that God should transform himself, and subdue and master all his glories, to a possibility of human apprehension and converse, the best reason would have thought it such a thing as God could not do, had it not been actually done. It is (as it were) to cancel the essential distances of things, to remove the bounds of nature, to bring heaven and earth, and (what is more) both ends of a contradiction together. Again, the same reverend person says, in relation to his faith about the person of Christ, That were it not to be ador'd as a mystery, it would be exploded as a contradiction.

P. 316.

P. 495.

Dr. HENRY MORE, in his *Mystery of Godliness*, says, *There is scarce any Church in Christendom at this day (in the next page he affirms this, of the whole visible Church in what nation soever under heaven) which does not obtrude not only plain falshoods, but such falshoods that will appear to any free spirit pure contradictions and impossibilities, and that with the same gravity, authority, and importunity, that they do the holy oracles of God. To which I crave leave to add his judicious reflection that follows, tho foreign to my present design, That this conduct of the priest is a heavy sight to the truly Religious, and joy to the profane, who take advantage thereby against the*

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the wholly mystery of piety, as if there was no truth in it, because that so gross falshoods are urg'd upon them with the same solemnness as those things that (were it not for the serious impudence of the priest in other open falsities) might pass with them for true.

3dly. A third instance of the priests conduct, is, their acknowledgment of abuses, defects, and false doctrines in the Church

The reverend Dr. GRABE (a man supported at the charge of her most excellent Majesty, encourag'd by the most eminent Divines of our Church in his undertaking to publish the *Alexandrian manuscript of the Septuagint*, and employ'd by our ecclesiastical governours to vindicate our establish'd faith against the reverend Mr. WHISTON) acknowledges certain * *abuses and defects* to have crept into our Church; particularly, *baptism by bare sprinkling, not mixing water with wine in the Lord's supper, and the eating of blood and things strangled*: all which abuses, he says, we are guilty of, in opposition to the ancient Church all the world over, and the plain testimonies of scriptures. How far the reverend doctor is in the right as to all these particulars, I do not pretend to say: but with respect to the last, I have often wonder'd how men professing to believe in the Bible, and particularly those who pretend to understand it according to the sense of the primitive Church, can live in the practice of *eating blood and things strangled*, in opposition to so plain an institution, precept, and rule. For it is forbidden by God in the Old Testament Gen. 9. 4. Lev. 17. 14. for a moral and eternal reason, viz. *because the blood* & 19. 26.

* *Preface to Essay on the Doctrine of the Apostles* p. 11.

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Deut. 12. *blood is the life: and in the New Testament, to*
 23. *abstain from things strangled and from blood, is*
 Acts 15. *enjoin'd as a necessary thing. And this precept*
 20, 28. *was so religiously observ'd by all Christians in*
the first ages of the Gospel, that TERTULLI-
AN says, One experiment made use of by you
(Heathens) for the discovery of Christians, is to try
whether they will eat black-puddings; you well
knowing that they judg it unlawful to commit
*that transgression you command *.*

Dr. GRABE, as we are inform'd by † Dr. HICKES, was for restoring the pure primitive practice and discipline, which continu'd more or less corrected in the Church till the Reformation (which by this account was a Reformation backwards) particularly the practice of *chrism* in confirmation; anointing the sick with oil; confession, & sacerdotal absolution as judicial; and prayer for the souls of the dead; the want of all which being defects in the Reform'd Churches.

Dr. HICKES ‡ speaks of several things amiss in the Church.

Again he mentions particular defects, such as § the want of a side-board or buffet to place the elements on before they are placed on the communion table, and * going to Church in the same dress we go to plays and balls, &c.

The

* *Inter testamenta Christianorum botulos cruore distentos admovetis, certissimi scilicet illicitum esse penes illos per quod exorbitare vultis. Opera, Ed. Rigal. p. 10.*

† *Account of Dr. Grabe, p. 8, 9, 10.*

‡ *Pref. to Letters between him and a Popish Priest.*

§ *Pref. to two Treat. p 53, 54, 55.*

* *Two Treat. p. 93.*

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He says likewise, * *That in this Kingdom many unchristian maxims, extremely hurtful and detrimental to the Christian Religion, are receiv'd for Laws, viz. „ That the King is the supreme „ ordinary; That canons made by the Church „ Regent or Episcopal College oblige not Christians in conscience, without or against the „ King's consent; That the King by Act of Parliament may deprive Bishops; That he is the „ last appeal of our Church in spiritual causes; and that the Acts of Parliament touching election and consecration of Bishops are unchristian.*

The reverend Mr. LESLEY says, † *That in Sweden they pray not only for the Church in general, but for the Clergy before the King. Thus it is in all liturgies except ours. But the King in our liturgy is thrust in between the Church and the Bishops, upon the notion, I suppose, of his being head of the Church; and the whole Royal family are drawn in after him, as being heads in reversion. We improve, and seem to take care in the first place for our bodies before our souls, and for this world more than for eternity. But they retain the primitive form in Sweden: they reform not backwards.*

Lastly, Our Liturgy supposes our Church defective, when we pray upon *Ash-wednesday* for the restoration of godly discipline.

4thly. A Fourth, instance of the priests conduct, is, *Their professing they will not tell the truth, and making it matter of reproach in any of the Clergy to tell the truth.*

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Upon

* *Letter in the Character of a Primitive Bishop, p. 271.*

† *Case of the Regale, p. 28.*

Upon occasion of Dr. WAKE's having endeavour'd to state by law and history the power of our Princes over Synods and Convocations, Dr. ATTERBURY says, * *Were all that Dr. WAKE says expressly true and justifiable, yet whether the labouring the point so heartily as he does, and shewing himself so willing to prove the Church to have no rights and privileges, be a very decent part in a clergyman, he leaves to his friends to consider.*

Again, he says, † *could such a fine point be made out, yet surely it does not become clergymen to help it forward. Let us leave that dirty work to be done by the profess'd enemies of Religion, and the order; but let not the hands of Levi be employ'd in it.*

A reverend Prelate, in a letter to Mr. WHISTON about one of the most important articles of the whole Christian Religion, *the eternal divinity of our blessed Saviour*, says to him, ‡ *If you are sure you are in the right in any matter wherein you have the Church's judgment against you, you should be careful not to break the peace of the Church by writing against it. If it were but one brother that would take hurt by your writing, the Apostle* Rom. 14. 21. *says, it is not good to venture that, even tho you know you are in the right; for as it followeth, hast thou faith? have it to thy self.*

Dr. EDWARDS of Oxford, says with respect to the reverend Mr. WHISTON's renouncing the doctrines of the ever-blessed Trinity, and the eternal

* *Pref. to Rights of an English Convocation, p. 11.*

† *Ibid. p. 38*

‡ *Whiston's Primit. Christ. vol. I. Pref. p. 27.*

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eternal divinity of our Lord, That * *the oaths, subscriptions, solemn and repeated declarations, those strong chains and fetters, as one might justly imagine them to be, ought not to be broke through.* So that according to this profound divine, the *priests* are never to have any regard for truth, but when it happens to agree with the oaths they have once taken, and the subscriptions and declarations they have once made. Thus a *Mahometan* or *Popish* priest is for ever to continue true to his *false oaths, subscriptions, and declarations*; and a *Church-of-England* priest is to continue true to his *oaths, &c.* not because he is in the right, but because he has *sworn and subscrib'd.*

That eminent Reformer Archbishop CRAMER, by the following *query* laid by him before King HENRY VIII. sufficiently show'd his disposition to conceal the *truth* from the *laity*, and by consequence must have suppos'd the *Clergy* blamable in telling the *truth.*

† *If the clergy know that the common sort of men have them in a higher veneration, because they are persuaded that it lieth in the will and power of priests to remit or not remit sins at their pleasure; whether in such case the said clergy offend, if they wink at this, and voluntarily suffer people to continue in this opinion?*

Lastly, the reverend Mr. WHISTON, who has for a long while had an intimate correspondence with the *Cheif of the clergy of our Church,*
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says

* *Doctrine of Original Sin, p. 114.*

† *Cannon's Account of two Motions in Convocation, p. 14, 15.*

says, that * artfully to conceal, disguise, or directly deny what they cannot but inwardly know to be the truth, is at this day, he fears a sin too common among several of the more learned and judicious of the Clergy.

5thly. A Fifth instance of the priests conduct, is, If any good Christian happens to reason better than ordinary, they presently charge him with *Atheism*, *Deism*, *Arianism*, or *Socinianism*: as if good sense and orthodoxy could not subsist together.

Thus the reverend and religious Dr. CUDWORTH, who has written the most learnedly of all the Divines of our Church, in his *Intellectual system of the universe*, against *Atheism*, is charg'd with being an *Atheist* for that very book, by a † reverend Divine, who only qualifies it by saying, That the most that Charity it self can allow the doctor, if it were to step forth and speak his most favourable character to the world, is, that he is an *Arian*, a *Socinian*, or a *Deist*. Thus the late Archbishop TILLOTSON, and the present Bishop of *Salisbury* are charg'd with *Socinianism* by the ‡ reverend Mr. LESLEY; and in a book of § Dr. HICKES's, Dr. TILLOTSON is said to be the gravest *Atheist* that ever was.

Thus the reverend Dr. CLARKE, and Mr. SAMUEL BOLD, & Mr. JOHN LOCKE are

* *Ref. on a disc. of free-thinking.* p. 52.

† *Dedic. before a Disc. of the Messiah,* p. 16, 17, 19, 162.

‡ *Lesley's Charge of Socinianism against Tillotson and Burnet.*

§ *Hickes's Disc. upon Dr. Tillotson and Burnet,* p. 40.

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are charg'd with *Atheism* by the reverend * Mr. CARROL; and Mr. CHILLINGWORTH, the ablest advocate we ever had against Popery, goes commonly under the opprobrious name of Socinian.

6thly A sixth instance of the priests conduct, is, their rendring the canon of scripture uncertain.

Dr. GRABE says, † that the Canon of scripture was not made while the Apostles were alive; no not presently after the martyrdom of PETER and PAUL, when CLEMENS wrote his Epistle to the Corinthians; wherein the Old Testament is frequently cited, but not one passage out of the New, except from those Epistles which PAUL had writ to the Corinthians. From thence it is to be infer'd, that CLEMENS thought the Corinthians were acquainted with no other scriptures, but PAULS Epistles to them. The case is the same in respect of BARNABAS and HERMAS; who, tho they both wrote a little after the destruction of Jerusalem, have not cited any book of the New Testament.

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Dr.

* Remarks on Clarke's Lectures. Defence of the Remarks. Dissert. against Locke.

† Canon sacrorum librorum non statim ab initio Ecclesia, vivis adhuc Apostolis, factus erat; imo ne quidem mox post martyrium Pauli & Petri, quo tempore S. Clemens epistolam dabat ad Corinthios, canon erat conditus, siquidem ipse sapissimè veteris quidem Testamenti scripturas, nullam vero novi Instrumenti allegavit, exceptis iis qua ad ipsos Corinthios ab Apostolo data erant, literis: unde colligere est; Clementem nullas alias Corinthiis notas existimasse. Similis quoque ratio Barnabæ & Herma, quorum uterque paulo post excidium Hierosolymitanum scripsit, neuter ullum novi testamenti librum allegavit. Spicil. Secul. 1. p. 310.

Dr. MILLS says, * *There was no collection made of any books of scripture, whether of Epistles or Gospels, till above threescore years after the death of Christ. Not of the Epistles certainly; for concerning the authors and authority of some of these, there were great disputes and doubts in the Apostolical Churches in the following ages, which had never happen'd, had any of the last surviving Apostles constituted a Canon. Nor of the four Gospels; the reading of which in the Churches was not then determin'd and agreed on, as I shall show presently.*

Dr. BEVERIDGE says, † *Among all the more ancient writers of Ecclesiastical matters, you will hardly find two that agree in the same number of canonical books.*

Again he says, ‡ *No one can be ignorant, that*
some

* *Huc usque, nimirum ab anno evulgata epistola priori D. Pauli ad Thessal, ad tempus usque editi Joannis evangelii, dimidium fere dico seculum, sparsi erant hi libri, ac separatim circumferebantur singuli, absque omni ceterorum comitatu. Nondum enim erat facta collectio aliqua sive epistolarum, sive etiam evangeliorum. Non epistolarum certe; siquidem de aliquarum ex his seu autoribus seu autoritate, apud ipsas ecclesias Apostolicas seculis proxime sequentibus privatim dubitatum ac publice disputatum fuit: Id quod nequam accidisset si ab aliquo Apostolorum adhuc superstitere, ac praesertim Joanne, certius ipsarum numerus fuisset constitutus. Neque vero Evangeliorum: de hisce solis quatuor in ecclesiâ lectitandis nihil adhuc certe definitum erat, uti mox ostendam. Millii Proleg. p. 23.*

† *Inter omnes vetustiores rerum ecclesiasticarum Scriptores vix duos in eodem numero librorum canonicorum consentientes reperies. Apud Entii Bibl. Sanctam. p. 376.*

‡ *De nonnullis ex vere canonicis Apostolorum libris, tribus prioribus Christianismi seculis dubitatum fuisse, neminem fregit. Codex Can. vind, Edit. Clerico. p. 117.*

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some of the truly canonical books of the Apostles were doubted of in the three first centuries of Christianity.

7thly. A Seventh instance of their conduct, is, their owning and labouring to prove the text of the scripture to be precarious.

The reverend Mr. GREGORY of Christ-Church in Oxford says, * *There is no profane author whatsoever, cæteris paribus, has suffer'd so much by the hand of time, as the New Testament has done.*

Dr. MILLS has publish'd a book containing all the various readings of the *New Testament* he has been able to meet with; and they amount, according to a † *late author*, to above 30000.

How the text (that is the *Orthodox Church of England text*) of scripture is affected by this work of Dr. MILLS, you may see by the late learned *Critique* of Dr. WHITBY, who in general thus declares his judgment of it. Says he, ‡ *The vast quantity of various readings*
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collected

* *Preface to his Posthumous Works.*

† *Pref. Nov. Test. Wetstenii.*

‡ *Variantium lectionum immensa moles multorum animos suspensos reddet, iisque suspiciones haud parvas injiciet, parum quid certi ex libris in omni commate, imo in omni fere commatis parte variantibus, expectari posse. Depravationem illam textûs Græci, quæ ejus auctoritatem labefacit, ex magnâ illâ lectionum varietate, quam in exemplaribus Græcis R. Stephani invenit, arguit Morinus: Quantos igitur de textu eodem triumphos agent Pontificis, cum viderint eas lectiones a Millio quadruplo antiores factas, & demum appendicæ copiosâ locupletatas? Id insuper causa nostræ haud parum officere existimo, quod corruptelas interpolationisque haud*
paucas

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collected by the doctor, must of course make the mind doubtful or suspicious, that nothing certain can be expected from books, where there are various readings in every verse, and almost in every part of every verse. MORINUS argu'd the depravation of the Greek text, which seems to weaken its authority, from the great variety of readings that he had found in the manuscript copies of R. STEPHENS. How will the Papists triumph over the text of scripture, when they see those readings made four times as many, and at length increas'd by a large appendix? More-over, it does not a little hurt our cause of Protestancy, that the doctor confidently affirms, that not a few corruptions and interpolations have happen'd almost from the beginning of Christianity, and in the Apostolick age. *

Lastly

paucas ab ipsis ecclesia incunabulis, evoque panè Apostolico S. Scripturis accidisse fidenter Millius pronunciet. Whitbyi Examen Var. Lect. Millii, p. 3. 4.

* It being matter of dispute, on occasion of Dr. Mills's & Dr. Whitby's performances, whether the numerous various readings do affect the text of scripture or no, I shall endeavour to state the matter as distinctly as I can in the following observations.

1. Were there an original manuscript of the scriptures under the hands of the inspired Authors yet extant; Or had the several copists in all ages of the Church been inspired in transcribing them; It is possible we might have had a most perfect text, of that most perfect book, printed.

2 But it not having pleas'd the divine providence to make use of either of these methods, we are (since our salvation is suppos'd to depend on the right understanding of the scriptures) oblig'd to build our faith on a more uncertain foundation, & by Critical guesses upon the infinite number of various readings to make a text for our selves; as we do in the case of Terence or any other antient Author.

3. There is still a further uncertainty in fixing the words of Scripture by Critical guesses, than of any other antient books;

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Lastly, Dr. MILLS has discover'd a * *passage* (very little known before, and which escap'd the enquiries even of father SIMON, who has labour'd so much to prove the *uncertainty* of the *text* of *scripture*) giving an account of a general alteration of the Text of the four Gospels in the sixth century; and this recorded by VICTOR of TUNIS, an *African* Bishop, who † *flourish'd* in that very age, in his *Chronicon*, which has been only printed by CANISIUS at *Ingolstadt* in 1600., and by JOSEPH SCALIGER in his edition of the *Chronicon* of EUSEBIUS. The *passage* is as follows, ‡ *In the Consulship of MESSALLA, at the*

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books; because many of the various readings of scripture have been made not only thro ignorance and negligence, but thro design to support either Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy; whereas the various readings of other antient authors are chiefly owing to the ignorance & negligence of transcribers.

4. *Tho the text of Scripture be, like the text of all other antient books, rendered uncertain thro the ignorance & negligence of transcribers, and more uncertain than all others thro the wilful corruptions of transcribers; Yet it is evident, that the more antient manuscripts there are which remain to us & the more collations are made of them, the better are Critical Christians qualify'd to fix a true text of scripture for themselves. And by consequence such Criticks as Father Simon & Dr. Bentley ought to be better Beleivers & in a more direct road to salvation than others who are inferior to them in Criticism.*

5. *It is no less evident that the number of various readings [if they are real] collected by Dr. Mills render that printed Text from whence the Church of England Bible is translated | or indeed any other Text whether manuscript or printed | so very uncertain that we may justly conclude with a reverend Divine, That we should have more of the true text by being less tenacious of the printed one. Clergymen Thanks in a Letter to Dr. Bentley. p. 37.*

* *Prolegom.* p. 98.

† *Cave's Hist. Lit.* p. 415.

‡ *Messalla Consule, Anastasio Imperatore jubente, sancta Evangelia, tanquam ab idiotis Evangelistis composita, reprehenduntur & emendantur.*

command of the Emperor ANASTASIUS, the holy Gospels, as written by † ignorant Evangelists, are corrected and amended. The doctor likewise tells us, that St. ISIDORE Bishop of Seville relates the same fact in his *Chronicon*.

8thly. An eight Instance of the conduct of the Clergy, by which they make *free-thinking* necessary, is *their daily publishing of books concerning the nature of God, and the truth and authority of the scriptures*, wherein they suggest the arguments of *unbelievers*; and more particularly * *Treatises in dialogue*, where they actually introduce *Atheists, Deists, Scepticks, and Socinians*, speaking in behalf of their opinions, and that (unless you will suppose the *priests* to be unfair writers in controversy) with the same strength, subtilty, and art, those men show either in their books or conversation.

9thly. A ninth instance of the *priests* conduct, is as follows: There is but one compleat ancient *system of Atheism* (*viz. EPICURUS's system* written by LUCRETIVS) left us upon record; and the *priests* will not suffer that to lie hid in a learned language; but one of them, the late reverend Mr. CREECH, has translated it into *English* verse, for the benefit and entertainment of the *English* reader. And there are more recommendations of Divines prefix'd before his performance, than ever I saw before any *Religious* or *devout author* whatsoever; and those all eminent and high Divines, such as the reverend Dr.

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† *Phileleutherus Lipsiensis's Remarks on the Disc. of free-thinking*, p. 84.

* *Lesley's Dialogue between a Deist and a Christian*, 8vo. and his *Dialogues between a Socinian and a Christian*, 4to. *Nichols's Conference with a Theist*; and many others.

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EDWARD BERNARD, the reverend Dr. DUKE, the reverend Dr. ADAMS, Provost of King's-College in Cambridge, and the reverend Mr. JOSHUA BARNES, and divers others; in whose company appears also the *right modest and orthodox matron* Mrs. A. BEHN.

10thly. A Tenth instance of their conduct, is, *their use of pious frauds in translating and publishing of books.*

In the old Protestant Bible, * printed in King EDWARD the VI's days, and in the beginning of Queen ELIZABETH's reign in the year 1562. the word Ἐκκλησία was translated every where *Congregation*, and not *Church*; whereby great offence was given to the Papists: but the reverend translators of the present common Bible have in some places render'd it *Assembly*, and in others *Church*, with design to have us believe that the word *Church* signifies the *priest*. For wherever the word Ἐκκλησία manifestly signifies the *People*, as it does in *Acts* 19. 32. there they render it *Assembly*: whereas had they said, *The Church* (instead of *Assembly*) *was confus'd*, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together; the signification of the word *Church* would not have admitted of any doubt about its meaning. And wherever the meaning of the word Ἐκκλησία is not so clear from the context as it is in the foregoing passage of the *Acts*, there they translate it *Church*; as for instance in *Mat.* 18. 17. *Tell the Church.* By which the *Priests* understand, *Tell the Priest*. Whereas were the word Ἐκκλησία always translated alike, either every where *Church*, or every where *Assembly*, there

* Parker's Life by Strype, p. 207.

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there could be no dispute who are meant by Ἐκκλησία; nor by consequence, to whom belong the great privileges which are throughout the scripture given to those who are signify'd by that word.

Ch. 7. 59. The reverend *translators* of the *Bible* have put another pious fraud upon us, by inserting the word *God* in this passage of the *Acts*; *And they stoned STEPHEN, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit*; without the least foundation either from any manuscript or printed copy whatsoever of the *New Testament* in any language.

Acts 20. 28. Likewise to conceal the true meaning of the word Ἐπισκόπος, the reverend *translators* have render'd it *Overseers*, because it manifestly signifies in that place several persons in one congregation; whereas had they translated it *Bishops*, (as they do in other places) it would have appear'd that a scripture *Bishop* was not a *Diocesan Bishop*: nay, it would have appear'd that *Bishop* and *Presbyter*, (or *Elder*) were synonymous terms in the scriptures, since these very men who are call'd here Ἐπισκοποι, are call'd Πρεσβύτεροι in the seventeenth verse.

Rom 16. 1. Thus to conceal the *Order of Deaconesses*, and thereby keep women (who now think they have no right to any higher office, than to sweep the Church and open pews) ignorant of their Gospel-privilege, PHÆBE is in our translation said to be a *servant of the Church*; whereas the original is Διάκονος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, a *Deaconess of the Church*.

In

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In the *postscript* of the second *Epistle* to TIMOTHY, TIMOTHY is call'd *the first Bishop of the Church of the Ephesians*; and in the *postscript* of the *Epistle* to TITUS, TITUS is call'd *the first Bishop of the Church of the Cretians*: but both these were prov'd in Parliament to be † *bold and spurious additions*, made by some antient priests, and continu'd by our reverend editors.

To give authority to the three *Creeds* us'd in the *Common-prayer books*, and recogniz'd in the *Articles of the Church*; one is call'd the *Apostles*, another the *Nicene*, and the last *St. Athanasius's*; whereas it is past dispute, that * *not one of them* belongs to the authors, or author, to whom it is attributed. But to do justice to the compilers of the *Common-prayer book* and *Articles*, I do allow this might proceed from ignorance as well as design. But the reverend *Examiner* of the *Bishop of Sarum's Exposition on the 39. Articles* is plainly for continuing this imposition, when he says, ‡ *That it would have been proper for an Expositor to have made the best of the Article, rather than to have taken pains to have shown the Creeds were not rightly nam'd*; and that the *Bishop's* honest discovery does not comport with the design of the *Article*.

Even in matters of less consequence they corrupt books. Thus the reverend Mr. BROWN, Rector of *Sunbridg* in *Kent*, translated into *English* some *Letters* of father PAUL, and printed them in 1693. and in his translation has smother'd the most remarkable and valuable passages that are to be

† *Diurnal Occurrences*, p. 123. 124.

* *Bishop of Sarum's Expos.* p. 106.

‡ *Prefat. Examin.* p. 41.

be found in those *Letters*. Some of the instances will give you some entertainment.

He has omitted these words : 1. *If the * King of England* (meaning King JAMES the first) *were not more a doctor than a King.*

2. *If the King of England were not a doctor, some good might be look'd for.* But the most remarkable omission is this which follows.

3. *For the English, says F. PAUL, I fear. The great power of the Bishops, tho' under a King, makes me suspect something. For whenever they have an easy Prince, or an Archbishop of an high spirit, the Royal power will dwindle, and the Bishops will aspire to an absolute dominion. Methinks I see in England the horse bridled and saddled, and the old Rider, as I gueß, will shortly get upon his back.*

The reverend translator of BAUMGARTEN'S *Travels*, in CHURCHIL'S *Collection of Voyages*, has stifled a passage that contains two very remarkable particulars, which are as follows † *Without the city of Grand Cairo on the banks of the Nile, they shew'd us a Mosque, where during the time of divine service the dead are said to come out*
of

* Preface, p. 59.

† *Extra urbem in ripâ Nili muschkeæ quadam nobis monstrata est, ubi tempore quo sacra peragunt, humati e sepulcris prodire dicuntur, ac donec suos opinione sacros ritus peragunt, stabiles immobilesque consistere demum & disparere; quod qui ignoret in Cairo nemo est. Vidimus insuper ibi lacum quendam ingentem, Nilo contiguum, qui singulis annis fertur rubescere instar cruoris: quod fortè sit in memoriam plage illius Egyptiæ, quæ aqua omnes in sanguinem versa memorantur. Peregrinationes, l. 1. c. 18.*

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of their graves, and to continue out of the ground as long as divine service holds, and then to vanish out of sight. This is affirm'd by every body in Grand Cairo. We saw likewise there a certain great lake, which is reported to be as red as blood once a year; which perhaps continues in memory of that Egyptian plague, by which the waters of Egypt were said to be turn'd into blood.

The right reverend Bishop FELL corrupted in many places WOOD's *History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford*, while it was in the press; and in particular struck out several passages wherein WOOD had done justice to Mr. HOBBS, and inserted others in their stead, derogatory to his fame and character. Of this Mr. WOOD himself acquainted Mr. HOBBS; and if you have the curiosity to see what the alterations were, you may find them in HOBBS'S P. 114. *Life*.

In short, these frauds are very common in all books which are publish'd by *priests or priestly men*; and because some few may think amiss of'em for it, I will not conceal the apology that may be made for this practice. It is certain, they may plead the *authority of the Fathers* and the *antient Christian priests* for *forgery, corruption, mangling and destruction of Authors*, with more reason than for any of their *Articles of faith*. For St. JEROM says, * *If therefore I have translated*
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* *Si igitur, quæ bona sunt transtuli, & mala vel amputavi vel correxi veltacui, arguendus sum, cum per me Latini bona Origenis habeant & mala ignorent? Si hoc est crimen, arguatur & Hilarius: Sit in culpâ Vercellensis, qui omnium Psalmorum commentarios hæretici hominis [Eusebii Casariensis] vertit in nostrum eloquium, hæretica prætermittens*

the good things of ORIGEN, and corrected or conceal'd the bad, am I to be blam'd for making men acquainted with what is good in him, and keeping 'em ignorant of what is bad in him? If this be a crime, St. HILARY is as guilty as I am. EUSEBIUS VERCELLENSIS is likewise in fault, who translated into Latin the Commentaries of EUSEBIUS of Cæsarea a grand heretick, but has omitted all his heresies. I say nothing of VICTORINUS, and others, lest I should seem not so much to defend my self, as to seek complices in the same crime. And likewise before St. Jeroms time, as a learned Author in forms us, * The Greek Clergy had so much credit at Court that the Emperors for their sake, burnt the works of many of the old Greek Poets. And therefore we have lost the Plays of MENANDER, APOLLODORUS, PHILEMON, and ALEXIS, and the Poems of SAPPHO, ERINNA, ANACREON, MIMNERMUS, BION & ALCÆUS. And instead of these, the Poems of GREGORY NAZIANZEN were substituted; which tho' they excise an ardent Zeal for Religion, yet they fall short of those others in propriety of words & elegancy of expression. These priests were indeed shamefully injurious to the old Greeks, but they gave the greatest testimony of Integrity, Probity, & Religion.

tens. Taceo de Victorino Pictavienensi & ceteris—ne non tam me defendere, quam sociorum criminis videor quavere. Adv. Vigilantium. Op. Tom. 2. p. 312, 313. Ed. Erasmi.

* *Sacerdotes Græcos tantâ floruisse autoritate apud Cæsares Byzantinos; ut integrâ illorum gratiâ complura de veteribus Græcis Poëmata combusserint. Atque ita Menandri, Apollodori, Philemonis, Alexis fabellas, & Alexi Carmina intercidisse. Tum pro his substituta Nazianzeni nostri Poëmata; qua*

gion. † Nor did GREGORY the GREAT, the Apostle of England, make less havock among the Latin Authors, when under the pretense of an austere sanctity he caus'd the Palatine library at Rome to be burnt.

I might go on to assign other instances of the priests conduct, such as their declamations against reason; their arts and methods of discouraging examination into the truths of Religion; and their encouraging examination, when authority is against them, or when they think that truth is clearly on their side; their instilling principles into youth, &c. But that I may not run this letter into too great a length, I forbear insisting on these and many other instances of their conduct, which I could assign. And therefore shall now conclude from those foregoing, that since the priests, not only of different religions and sects, but of the same sect, are infinitely divided in opinion about the nature and attributes of God, and the authority and meaning of scriptures; since we have priests who acknowledg the doctrines of our Church, which they have solemnly sworn to preach up, to be contradictory to one another and to reason, and that several abuses, defects, and false doctrines are crept into the Church; since they profess they

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quæ etsi excitant animos nostrorum hominum ad flagrantiorum Religionis cultum, non tamen verborum Atticorum proprietatem & Græcæ Linguae elegantiam docent. Turpiter quidem isti sacerdotes in veteres Græcos malevoli fuerunt; sed Integritatis, Probitatis, & Religionis maximum dedere testimonium. Johannes Medices apud Barnesii vitam Anacreontis. p. 61.

† Nec Gregorius magnus, Saxonum nostrorum Patrum Apostolus ille, minus in Latinas literas peccavit; quando Bibliothecam illam Palatinam Romæ comburendam curavit, sub austerioris sanctimonie specie. Barnesii Vita Anacreontis. p. 62. 63.

will not tell the truth themselves, and make it matter of reproach in the clergy to tell the truth; since they prejudice men against their own doctrines, by insinuations of infidelity and heresy, against all good Christians who are men of sense; since they render both the canon and text of scripture precarious and uncertain; since they fill mens heads with irreligious notions, by publishing the arguments of infidels, and reviving the old systems of Atheism; and lastly, since they are guilty, on so many occasions, of frauds in the publishing of books: we have no way of settling our selves in a right notion of God; in the reception of the present canon of scripture, and that sacred Greek text of the New Testament which is commonly printed; and in the belief of the doctrine, and practice of the discipline and worship of the Church of England, as founded on that pure text; nor can we be easy in our own minds under the prejudices and difficulties which the priests put into us against these truths, but by ceasing to rely on them, and thinking freely for our selves.

S E C T. III.

I Have frequently observ'd in conversation, that men are more led by certain difficulties and objections, which they pick up, to reject what is certain and true, than they are to admit any thing for true by virtue of a proof *à priori*. Wherefore I will now consider the principal objections I have met with, in the mouths of the sincere, to examination and free-thinking.

1st. It is objected, That to suppose men have a right.

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right to think on all subjects, is to engage them in enquiries for which they are no way qualify'd; the bulk of mankind really wanting a capacity to think justly about any speculations: and therefore 'tis absurd to assert that men have a right to think freely, much more that it is their duty to think freely. To which I answer.

1. That to assert only a bare right in any man to do a thing, implies a right in him to let it alone, if he thinks fit. And therefore no man needs engage himself in any enquiries by virtue of his right to *think freely*, unless he judges himself sufficiently qualify'd.

2. To assert it is all mens duty to *think-freely* on certain subjects, engages them only in enquiries on those subjects, which they who contend for the necessity of all mens assenting to certain propositions, must allow all men are qualify'd to do. For the only way to know what opinion I ought to have in any matter, is to think about that matter; and to suppose that God requires me to believe any opinion, and has not put into my power the means of understanding the grounds of that opinion, is absurd.

3. Supposing the bulk of mankind do want the capacity to *think freely* on matters of speculation, I do then allow, that *free-thinking* can be no duty. And the *priests* must likewise allow, that men can be no way concern'd about truth or falsehood in speculative matters; and that the belief of no opinions can be justly requir'd of them. But still the right to *think freely* will remain untouched for all those who are dispos'd to *think freely*.

2dly. It is objected, *That to allow and encourage men to think freely will produce endless divisions in opinion, and by consequence disorder in society.* To which I answer.

1. Let any man lay down a rule to prevent diversity of opinions, which will not be as fertile of diversity of opinions as *free-thinking*; or if it prevents diversity of opinions, will not be a remedy worse than the disease; and I will yield up the question.

2. Mere diversity of opinions has no tendency in nature to confusion in society. The *Pythagoreans*, *Epicureans*, *Stoicks*, *Platonists*, *Academicks*, *Cynicks*, and *Stratonicks*, all existed in Greece at the same time, and differ'd from one another in the most important points; viz. concerning the freedom of human actions, the immortality and immateriality of the soul, the being and nature of the Gods, and their government of the world; And yet no confusion ever arose in Greece on account of this diversity of opinions. Nay, so far were the differences among Philosophers from being suppos'd to have any tendency towards confusion in society, that the * *Epicureans* as well as other Philosophers had salaries settled on them by the Government. Nor did the great variety of religions and worships, which in old Rome were of † *six hundred different kinds*, ever produce any great disorder or confusion among the antients. Nay, so little *polemick divinity* was there among them, and so little mischief did the Heathen priests do, that there are no materials for that sort of history call'd *ecclesiastical history*: for,

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* *Gassendi de Vitâ & moribus Epicuri. Cap. 5. l. 2.*

† *Lipsius de magnitud. Rom. l. 4. c. 5.*

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as that universal scholar, GROTIUS, observes
 * *Ecclesiastical history consists of nothing but the Villanys of the governing Clergy.* And the true reason, why no ill effect follow'd this diversity of opinions both in Philosophy and Divinity was, because men generally agreed in that mild and peacable principle of allowing one another to think freely, and to have different opinions. Whereas had the common practice of calumny us'd among Christians prevail'd among them, or had they condemn'd one another to fire and faggot, imprisonment and fines in this world, and damnation in the next, and by these means have engag'd the passions of the ignorant part of mankind in their several parties; then confusion, disorder, and every evil work had follow'd, as it does at this day among those Christians who allow no liberty of opinion. We may be convinc'd of this by our own experience. How many disputes are there every where among Philosophers, Physicians, and Divines which, by the allowance of free debate, produce no ill effects? Further, let any man look into the history and state of the *Turks*, and he will see the influence which their tolerating principles and temper have on the peace of their Empire. It is affirm'd in their *Alcoran*, † *that one who lives as he ought to do, whether he be Christian or Jew, or whether he hath forsaken one profession to embrace another; every one that adores God, and does the thing that is good, shall undoubtedly obtain the love of God.* And pursuant to their principles has been their practice; for from the beginning of their Empire to this day, they have

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tolerated

* *Qui legit historiam Ecclesiasticam, quid legit nisi Episcoporum vitia?* Epistol. p. 7. col. 1

† *Azora* 2.

various sects, and particularly Christians (upon the terms of paying a small tribute) tho' those Christians esteem their prophet an impostor, and would infallibly extirpate with fire and sword their present protectors, if the Empire was in their hands. The peace of the *Turkish* Empire is so perfect (in respect to the peace among Christians) by virtue of the charity and toleration which prevail among them, that our pious Bishop TAYLOR says, * *He could not but expect that God would enlarge the bounds of the Turkish Empire, or some way or other punish Christians by reason of their pertinacious disputing of things unnecessary, undeterminable and unprofitable, and for their hating and persecuting their brethren, which should be as dear to them as their own lives, for not consenting to one another's follies and senseless vanities.* So that it is evident matter of fact, that a restraint upon thinking is the cause of all the confusion which is pretended to arise from diversity of opinions; and that liberty of thinking is the remedy for all the disorders which are pretended to arise from diversity of opinions.

3dly. It is objected, *That if free-thinking be allow'd, it is possible some men may think themselves into Atheism; which is esteem'd the greatest of all evils in government.* To which I answer

1. My Lord BACON says, † *The contemplative Atheist is rare*; But many Divines maintain that there never was a real *Atheist* in the world. And since the matter of fact is so uncertain as to be made a *problem*, there seems to need no provision against such a monster.

2. If

* *Epistle Ded. to Liberty of Prophecyng.*

† *Essays, p. 93. 4to.*

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2. If there is any such rare monster as an *Atheist*, DAVID has given us his Character in these words, *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God*, that is, no one denies the existence of a God but some idle, unthinking, shallow fellow. And Mr. HOBBS says, † *that they who are capable of inspecting the vessels of generation, and nutrition; and not think them made for their several ends by an understanding being, ought to be esteem'd destitute of understanding themselves.* And my Lord BACON further judiciously remarks, * *that a little philosophy enclineth mens minds to Atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth mens minds about to Religion.* And his observation is confirm'd by experience. For in ignorant Popish countries, where *free-thinking* passes for a crime, *Atheism* most abounds; for *free-thinking* being banish'd, it remains only for men to take up their Religion upon trust from the priest: which being such a jest upon all things sacred, by making the truths of God to depend on the various and contradictory whimsies of interested and fallible men; half-witted and unthinking people, who can easily see through this, conclude all alike the priest says. So that ignorance is the foundation of *Atheism*, and *free-thinking* the cure of it. And thus tho it should be allow'd, that some men by *free-thinking* may become *Atheists*, yet they will ever be fewer in number if *free-thinking* be permitted, than if it be restrain'd.

3. But supposing that *free-thinking* will produce a great number of *Atheists*; yet it is certain they can

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† *Qui si machinas omnes tum generationis, tum nutritionis satis perspexerint, nec tamen eas a mente aliquâ conditas ordinatasque ad sua quasque officia viderint, ipsi profectò sine mente esse censendi sunt.* De Homine c. 1.

* *Essays*, p. 90.

can never be so numerous where *free-thinking* is allow'd, as the *superstitious* and *enthusiasts* will be, if *free-thinking* be restrain'd. And if these latter are *equally* or *more* mischievous to society than the former, then it is better to allow of *free-thinking*, tho it should increase the number of *Atheists*, than by a *restraint* of *free-thinking*, to increase the number of *superstitious* people and *enthusiasts*. Now that *enthusiasts* and *superstitious* people are *equally* or *more* mischievous to society, I will prove to you in the judicious remarks of two men of great authority.

My Lord BACON says, * *Atheism* leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral vertue, tho Religion were not: but *superstition* dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men. Therefore *Atheism* did never perturb states; for it maketh men wary of themselves, as looking no further: and we see the times inclin'd to *Atheism* (as the times of AUGUSTUS CÆSAR) were civil times. But *superstition* hath been the confusion of many states; and bringeth in a new *primum mobile* that ravisheth all the spheres of government.

Dr. HICKES says, † If the *Atheist* does evil because he believes not, the *Enthusiast* will upon a thousand occasions believe he may do evil. If the one sticks at no means, tho never so wicked, the other thinks the goodness of the end will sanctify the most wicked means. In a word, they both make a cloke of Religion for covetousness, ambition and cruelty: They will both lye, murder, rob, and

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* *Essays*, p. 96.

† *Disc. on Tillotson and Burnet*, p. 24.

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rebel for holy Church and Religion; and there never yet was any holy league, covenant, or association, to begin or carry on rebellion, under the holy pretence of Religion, wherein the ringleaders were not Atheists or Enthusiasts: and of the two it is hard to tell which hath done most mischief in any kingdom. But the Enthusiast makes the more taking and plausible hypocrite of the two; he can sooner melt into tears, and more naturally counterfeit the spiritual man among the people, and transform himself with a better grace into an angel of light.

4thly. It is objected, That the priests are set apart to think freely for the laity, and are to be rely'd on, as Lawyers, Physicians, &c. are in their several faculties. To this I answer.

1. That no man is excluded from studying Law or Physick, because there are many already of those professions, nor from following his own judgment when he is sick or in law; nor is there any reason why a man, who is not a Doctor in Physick or a Serjeant at Law, may not understand as much Law and Physick as either of them. In like manner, the setting men apart for the study of Divinity, does not exclude others from the same study, nor from following their judgments about a point in Divinity, nor from knowing as much Divinity as any Doctor in Divinity. And by consequence, there is no necessity to rely on any man's judgment, either in Law, Physick, or Divinity. And this puts me in mind of a passage in Mr. LE CLERC's late * *Bibliothèque Choisie*. A Gentleman ask'd a proprietor of New-Jersey in America (where there are few inhabitants besides Quakers) whether they had any Lawyers among
F 5 them

* Tom. 25. p. 130.

them ? Then , whether they had any Physicians ? And lastly , whether they had any Priests ? To all which the proprietor answer'd in order , No. O happy country ! replies the gentleman , that must be a paradise !

2. But supposing that the bulk of mankind are oblig'd in matters of Law and Physick to rely on some one in those professions, the parallel will not hold from Law and Physick to Divinity, and the cases are different in these following respects.

(1.) When I thro unskilfulness in Law or Physick rely on some Lawyer or Physician, I am by no means under an obligation implicitly to believe the principles or opinions upon which the one prescribes or the other acts, or so much as to know any thing in nature about them. The Physician may cure me of a distemper, and the Lawyer may get me my right, let my ignorance in either profession be ever so great : These are matters which can be transacted by a *Deputy*. Whereas in matters of Divinity I am oblig'd to believe certain opinions my self, and can *depute* no man to believe for me; nor will any man's belief save me, except my own. So that it is my duty to think for my self in matters of Religion; whereas I am at liberty whether I will study Law or Physick.

(2.) Priests have no interest to lead me to true opinions, but only to the opinions they have list'd themselves to profess, and for the most part into mistaken opinions: For it is manifest that all *priests*, except the orthodox, are hir'd to lead men into mistakes. Whereas there are no Lawyers nor Physicians set apart and hir'd to defend mistaken opinions in those professions. And their interest,

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as to success, is the same with that of their *Clients* and *Patients*; but the *priests* interest is mostly different from that of the *laity*. A *layman* wants to know the truth, and the *priest* desires to have him of his opinion.

(3.) *Priests* are not set apart to study Divinity, as *Lawyers* and *Physicians* are to study Law and Physick. The *priests* do not study Divinity properly so call'd, but only how to maintain a certain system of Divinity. Thus the *Papish*, *Mahometan*, *Lutheran*, *Jewish*, *Siamese*, and *Presbyterian priests*, study their several Systems. Whereas *Physicians* are not ty'd down to *HIPPOCRATES*, or *GALEN*, or *PARACELSUS*, but have all nature and all mens observations before them, without any obligation to subscribe implicitly to any one: nor have *Lawyers* any rule, but the Law it self, which they are at liberty to interpret according to its real sense, being bound by no articles or subscriptions to interpret it otherwise.

(4.) If I die thro the conduct of a *Physician*, or lose my right by the conduct of my *Lawyer*, that is the worst which can befall me; but if I trust to a *priest* who is in the wrong, I am suppos'd to be eternally damn'd.

3. But thirdly I answer, that supposing the cases are parallel, no benefit will follow to any set of *priests* in particular, nor will there be any prevention of diversity of opinions, or of any other of those evils which *free-thinking* is suppos'd to produce. For if the cases are parallel, then men may chuse their own *priests*, as they chuse their own *Lawyers* and *Physicians*. And if so, then one man will chuse *JOHN BUNYAN*, another *DANIEL BURGESS*, a third *Dr. SWIFT*, or *Dr.*
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ATTERBURY, and so on. And if they may chuse *priests* of different opinions, why may they not as well think for themselves? since it is impossible for men by thinking for themselves to differ in opinion more from one another, and to hate and persecute one another more thorowly, than they must do upon granting them a liberty to chuse *priests* of different sorts.

5thly. It is objected, That certain speculations (tho false) are necessary to be impos'd on men, in order to assist the Magistrate in preserving the peace of society: and that it is therefore as reasonable to deceive men into opinions for their own good, as it is in certain cases to deceive children; and consequently it must be absurd to engage men in thinking on subjects where error is useful and truth injurious to them. To which I answer.

1. That this is an *irreligious objection*, and is so treated by C I C E R O in the person of C O T T A. Says he, * *What do you think of those men, who have said that the opinion of the existence of the immortal Gods was invented by wise men for the publick good; that they who would not be govern'd by reason, might be influenc'd by religion to do their duty? Have not they destroy'd all religion?*

2. I will grant the reasoning contain'd in the objection to be founded on a just principle, viz. that the good of society is the rule of whatever is to be allow'd or restrain'd; and I will likewise grant, that

* *Quid? ii qui dixerunt totam de Diis immortalibus opinionem fictam esse ab hominibus sapientibus Reipublica causa, ut quos ratio non movet, eos ad officium Religio duceret, nonne omnem religionem funditus sustulerunt?* De Naturâ Deor.
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that if errors are useful to human society, they ought to be impos'd : and consequently I must allow the inference , *that thinking ought to be restrain'd*. But then I affirm, that *the rule is as falsely as it is irreligiously apply'd*, and that both experience and reason demonstrate the imposition of speculations, whether true or false, to be so far from being a benefit, that it has been and must be the greatest mischief that has ever beset or can beset mankind. And to prove this I offer to your consideration the two following arguments.

(1.) Lust, covetousness, revenge, and ambition have in all ages more or less plagued the world, and been the source of great disorders. But zeal to impose speculations has not only had the same effects in common with those passions, but has carry'd men to a pitch of wickedness, which otherwise eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had enter'd into the heart of man to conceive. For what ancient or modern history can parallel the brutality of * *Religious Zealots*? What, the numerous massacres, desolations, and murders for Religion, in particular the massacres of *France* and *Ireland*, and the desolations and murders committed by the *Spaniards* in the *West-Indies*? What, the complicated wickedness and cruelty of our *English Clergy*, whom, as † *Bishop TAYLOR* tells us, *HENRY the fourth*, because he usurp'd the crown, was willing by all means to endear by murdering hereticks, that so he might be sure of them to all his purposes? And what, that steddily lasting machine of slavery, villany, and cruelty, the tribunal of the
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* *Nullas infestas hominibus bestias, ut sunt sibi ferales plerique Christianorum, expertus.* Ammian. Marcell. p. 302. Ed. Valesii.

† *Epist. Ded. before Liberty of Prophecyng.*

inquisition ? The most irregular of our other passions decay with time, and their mischievous effects are restrain'd by good sense and human policy; and we have some passions in us, such as pity, good-nature and humanity, which help to preserve a tolerable ballance in the human machine. But Religious zeal gathers strength with time, bears down common sense and policy, leaps the bounds of natural humanity, and vanquishes all the tender passions. Wherefore that excellent Prelate, Archbishop TILLOTSON, very justly observes, * that it will be hard to determine how many degrees of innocency and good-nature, or of coldness and indifferency in Religion, are necessary to over-ballance the fury of a blind zeal; since several zealots had been excellent men, if their Religion had not hinder'd them, if the doctrines and principles of their Church had not perverted and spoil'd their natural dispositions.

(2.) The great charge of supporting such numbers of men as are necessary to maintain impositions, is a burden upon society which was never felt on any other occasion. For I suppose it will be allow'd me, that the revenues belonging to the Orders of Priests, Monks, and Fryars in Popish countries, are a greater tax on the subject, and have introduc'd a greater degree of poverty, than has ever been felt from any Lay-Tyrants or Conquerors: for the latter have been contented with temporary plunder only, without concerning themselves how to find out ways to make mankind beggars for ever. The charge alone therefore of supporting such a number of Ecclesiasticks, is a great evil to society, tho it should be suppos'd the Ecclesiasticks themselves were employ'd in the most in-

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nocent manner imaginable, viz. in mere eating and drinking.

3. In answer to the objection, I affirm, that the peace and order of human society depending upon, or rather consisting in the practice of moral duties; if you impose any thing on mankind but what is moral, the zeal to perform that must of course abate mens zeal in the practice of moral duties, and consequently prejudice the peace of society.

(1.) For, extending of zeal to other objects besides morality, must take off a portion of our zeal for the practice of morality.

(2.) Since mankind can never be perfect in the performance of their duty, they will ever chuse to be punctual in that which is easiest to be done: and therefore if you impose any speculations on men, they will not fail in their zeal for them, and leave a proportionable share of morality undone.

(3.) It is matter of daily experience, that zeal for imposing speculations does destroy the practice of morality; and every Religious sect gives us a proof of it. For is it not obvious, that if you contend earnestly for the doctrines of your sect, and against the doctrines of all other sects; and in particular, if you are zealous for the independent power of the priest, his sole right to preach, and his power to damn or save at his pleasure: you shall be so far indulg'd in vice and wickedness, as to have it conceal'd if possible, and if made publick, to have it colour'd over with the most charitable construction imaginable? Whereas, if you are against predestination in Scotland, or transubstantiation in France, or against the power of the priest in either country, you shall be represented as the

the most infamous wretch (tho they have no particular immorality to charge upon you) and all your innocent or virtuous actions shall be construed after the most uncharitable manner.

Further, are not the streets of the city of *London*, beyond those of all other cities whatsoever, full of common whores, who are in effect publicly tolerated in their wickedness? And are not the men who have dealings with them free from all punishment, and almost from censure? And yet few or no complaints are made, of this wickedness in the open streets, either from the *pulpit* or the *press*. But if any man asserts *that a layman may sprinkle water in a child's face, or make a discourse in publick upon a text of scripture*; the press rings with the crime, and Dr. SACHEVEREL cries out from the pulpit, * *that the English fanatick, who sets up lay-elders, is the greatest monster upon earth.*

Besides they who have an interest to enlarge their *sect* and keep it united, know that nothing tends so much to its increase and union, as the toleration of vice and wickedness to as great a degree as they can conveniently: for by that means they are sure to engage all the rogues and vicious (and by consequence the fools, who will ever be led by them) in their party. And therefore wherever the power of the priest is at the height, they proceed so far in the encouragement of wickedness, as to make Churches sanctuaries or places of protection for all manner of villains. Pope P I U S V. shew'd that he well understood this secret of supporting a Church, when, upon hearing that the Protestants were in earnest against adul-

* *Affize Sermon at Oxford, Anno 1704.*

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adultery and fornication, he said, * *If they will not allow of such kind of sport in their Religion, it will never be of any long duration.* And this secret was early put in practice with success; for ZOZIMUS tells us, † *That CONSTANTINE the great, after he had committed such horrible villanys, which the Pagan priests told him were not to be expiated in their Religion, being assur'd by an Egyptian († Bishop) that there was no villany so great, but was to be expiated by the sacraments of the Christian Religion, embrac'd the new Impiety and quitted the Religion of his ancestors.* And this conversion of the Emperor CONSTANTINE gave occasion to JULIAN to satyrize thus our holy Religion: § *Whoever,*

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says

* *Non si chiava in questa Religione, non durava.* Confef. Cath. de Sancty. liv. 1. c. 1.

† Προσῆει τοῖς ἱερευσὶ καθάρσια τῶν ἡμαρτημένων αἰτῶν. εἰπονίων δὲ ὡς ἔ παραδέδοται καθαρμῷ τρόπῳ δυσσεβήματα τηλικαῦτα καθῆραι δυνάμεν, Ἀιγύπτῳ τις πασης ἁμαρτιάδ' ἀν' αἰρετικὴν εἶναι τῶν Χριστιανῶν διεβεβαιώσατο δόξαν. καὶ τῷτο ἔχειν ἐπ' αἵματι μα τὸ τῆς ἀσεβείας μεταλαμβάνοντάς αὐτῆς, πασης ἁμαρτίας ἔξω παραχρῆμα καθίσασθαι. Δεξάμενος δὲ ῥᾶσα Κωνσταντῖνος τὸν λόγον, καὶ ἀφεμένους τῶν πατρίων μετασχόντ' αὐτῶν ὁ Αἰγυπτίος αὐτῷ μετεδίδε, τῆς ἀσεβείας τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐποιήσατο, &c. Edit. Oxon. p. 104.

‡ *Les Césars de Julien par Spanheim, p. 309.*

§ Ὅσις φθορεὺς, ὅσις μισαιφόντ', ὅσις ἐναγῆς καὶ βδελυρὸς, ἴτω θάρρων, ἀποφανῶ γὰρ αὐτῶν

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says he, *is guilty of rapes, murders, sacrilege, or any other abominable crime, let him be wash'd with water, and he will become pure and holy: and if he relapses into the same impiety, he will again become pure & holy, by thumping his breast, and beating his head.*

6thly. It is objected, *That free-thinkers themselves are the most infamous, wicked, and senseless of all mankind.*

— This objection of wickedness and ignorance is made by all *sects* one against another, and serves to keep the several herds and folds of men united together, and against one another. And tho in reality men of all *sects* are much alike as to sense, where literature equally prevails, and every where the same as to their lives and conversations (as is obvious to any indifferent person) yet thro such spectacles do men see the defects of others, so partial are they to themselves, so ready to believe ill reports of those with whom they have any difference in opinion, and to believe good of those with whom they agree in opinion; so apt to put an ill construction on any actions of the former, and a good one on any actions of the latter; that nothing but the most familiar intercourse imaginable can make men, who are govern'd by one sort of *priests*, think they are like those in understanding and morals who are govern'd by another sort. But this objection, as it is urg'd against *free-thinkers*, is still with more difficulty to be remov'd by them; because they

αὐτὸν τῷ τῷ ὕδατι λῶσας, αἰτῖκα καθαρὸν
καὶ πάλιν ἐνοχῶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς γενέσθαι, δάσω
το σῆθ' ὅτι πλήξαντι, ἢ τὴν κεφαλὴν πατά-
ξαντι, καθαρῶ γενέσθαι. Juliani Opera.
Edit. Lips. p. 336.

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who have leisure, application, ability and courage to *think freely*, are so few in number in respect of any other sect, that they must be less able by conversation in the world to answer an objection against themselves, so early planted in mens minds, and so carefully cultivated. However, I think it may be much easier answer'd upon paper, and may be shown to be more unjustly urg'd against *free-thinkers*, than against any other sort of men whatsoever. In answer to it therefore, I observe,

1. That *men who use their understandings, must have more sense than they who use them not*; and this I take to be self-evident. And as to the other part of the objection, I assert, that *free-thinkers must as such, be the most virtuous persons every where.*

(1.) Because if any man presumes to think for himself, and in consequence of that departs from the sentiments of the herd of mankind among whom he lives, he is sure to draw upon himself the whole malice of the *priest*, and of all who believe in him, or who hope to make their fortune by pretending to believe in him (which must of course be 999 of 1000) and can have no credit but what his *virtue*, in spite of his enemies, necessarily procures for him. Whereas any *profligate fellow* is sure of credit, countenance and support, in any sect or party whatsoever, tho he has no other quality to recommend him than the worst of all vices, a *blind zeal to his sect or party*. The *free-thinker* therefore is for his own sake in this world oblig'd to be *virtuous* and honest; but the *bigot* is under no such obligation; and besides, has the temptation to

come a knave, becaule so many *weak people* of all *parties* are ready to put their confidence in him purely for his *bigotry*; and are incapable of being convinc'd, tho they have demonstration before their eyes every day, *that men are often the greater knaves, but never the honestest for any kind of superstition.*

(2.) Because whoever applies himself to any action, much more to *free-thinking* (which requires great diligence and application of mind) must by that habit expel all those vicious dispositions and passions, by which every man out of action is toss'd and govern'd.

(3.) 'Tis, by much *thinking* only, that men are able to comprehend in their minds *the whole compass of human life*, and thereby to demonstrate to themselves, that misery and unhappiness attend the practice of vice, and pleasure and happiness the practice of virtue, * *For who says CICERO, lives pleasantly, except him who delights in his duty, and has well consider'd and settled his manner of life, and who obeys the laws not out of fear, but observes and regards them because he judges it the best thing he can do?* Whereas we see by experience, that most men, for want of considering *the whole compass of human life*, mistake their own happiness, and think it wholly consists in gratifying their present passions and inclinations: and accordingly are very little mov'd *even* by their belief of future happiness and misery to become *virtuous*, while they are

* *Quis igitur vivit, ut vult, nisi qui gaudet officio cui vivendi via considerata atque provisus est; qui legibus non propter metum paret, sed eas sequitur atque colit, quia id maxime salutare esse judicat? Ciceronis Opera, Gron. p. 4170.*

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are under such a mistake. And thus of course all *unthinking people* are *vicious*, unless they are prevented by some *natural defect* or *impediment*, or are *moral* by the goodness of their natural temper. CICERO admirably describes the effects of this wrong judgment about the rule of morality. Says he, * *Whoever places happiness in any thing besides virtue, and judges of happiness by his present interest and advantage, and not by the rules of honesty, or what is good upon the whole; if he be consistent with himself, and is not carry'd away with his own good natural disposition, can neither be friendly, nor equitable, nor generous. No man can be courageous, who takes pain to be the greatest evil; nor be moderate in the enjoyment of pleasure, who takes that to be the greatest good.*

2. I answer, that tho there has hardly ever been a country where the *priests* have been so few in number, or have had so little credit, or where *superstition* has been at so low an ebb, as not to draw some inconveniences on men for *thinking-freely*; and by consequence, many *free-thinkers* have either fallen in with the reigning superstition of their country, or suffer'd it quietly to take its course, foreseeing how little good was to be done on so knavish and ignorant a creature as man, and how much mischief was to be expected from him: yet they who have been most distinguish'd in all ages for their understanding and virtue, have been *free-thinkers*.

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(1.) So-

* *Qui summum bonum instituit ut nihil habeat cum virtute conjunctum, idque suis commodis non honestate metitur; hic si sibi ipse consentiat & non interdum bonitate naturæ vincatur, neque amicitiam colere possit, nec justitiam, nec liberalitatem: fortis vero, dolorem summum malum judicans; aut temperans, voluptatem summum bonum statuens, esse certe nullo modo potest. De Offic. l. 1.*

(I.) SOCRATES, the divinest man that ever appear'd in the heathen world, and to whose virtue and wisdom all ages since have done justice, was a very great *free-thinker*. He not only disbeliev'd the *Gods* of his country, and the common Creeds about them, and declar'd his dislike, when he heard men attribute * *repentance, anger, and other passions* to the Gods, and talk of *wars and battels in heaven*, and of the *Gods getting women with child*, and such-like fabulous and blasphemous storys: but obtain'd a just notion of the nature and attributes of God, exactly agreeable to that which we have receiv'd by divine revelation, and became a true *Christian* (if it be allow'd that the primitive *Fathers* understood what true Christianity was:) For JUSTIN MARTYR tells us, † *That CHRIST, the first-begotten of God, is reason, of which all mankind are partakers; and that whoever live by reason, tho they are esteem'd Atheists and worshippers of no God are Christians: and that such were SOCRATES, and the like.* In like manner ERASMUS in his *Colloquies* comparing SOCRATES and the generality of Christians together, gives the preference to SOCRATES in point of *Christianity*. Says he, ‡ *There is nothing would more be-*
come

* *Platonis Euthyphro. p. 6. vol. 1. Ed. Serrani.*

† Τὸν Χριστὸν πρωτότοκον τῆ Θεᾶς, καὶ λόγον ὄντα, ἔκ παν γένους ἀνθρώπων μετέχε. καὶ οἱ μετὰ λόγον βιώσαντες, Χριστιανοὶ εἰσι, καὶ ἄθεοι ἐνομίσθησαν· οἷται ἐν Ἑλλήσι μὲν Σωκράτης, καὶ οἱ ὅμοιοι. *Opera, Ed. Par. p. 83.*

‡ *Nihil optius quadret in hominem vere Christianum quam quod Socrates paulo post bibituris cicotam, dixit Critoni; An Opera*

come a Christian, than what SOCRATES said to CRITO, a little before he drank his poisonous draught; "Whether God will approve of the
 „ actions of my life, I know not: I have truly
 „ done my best endeavours to please him; and
 „ have good hopes he will accept of them.,
 This is a wonderful thought in a man who knew not CHRIST and the holy scriptures. And when I read such things of him, I can hardly forbear crying out, Sancte SOCRATES, ora pro nobis. But how sneakingly have I seen several Christians die! Some of them rely on what is not to be rely'd on: others breathe out their last in despair, on the account of their own wickedness, and the scruples with which their heads are fill'd by their ignorant priests. And it is no wonder they should die after this manner, who spend their whole lives only in wrangling about and practising of ceremonies.

SOCRATES could not be suppos'd to have made notions or speculations, or mysteries, any part of his Religion, when he * demonstrated

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all

opera inquit, nostra sit probaturus Deus, nescio. Certe sedulò conati sumus, ut illi placeremus. Est mihi tamen bona spes, quod ille conatus nostros sit boni consulturus. Mirandus profecto animus in eo qui Christum & sacras scripturas non noverat. Proinde quum hujusmodi lego, vix mihi tempero, quin dicam, Sancte Socrates ora pro nobis!—At ego quot vidi Christianos, quam frigide morientes! Quidam fidunt in iis rebus, quibus non est fidendum: quidam ob conscientiam scelerum & scrupulos quibus indecti quidam obstreperunt morituro, pæne desperantes exhalant animam. Nec mirum eos sic mori, qui per omnem vitam tantum philosophati sunt in ceremoniis, &c. Opera, vol. 1. p. 683.

* Τὸς Φροντίζοντάς τὰ τοιαῦτα μωραίνον-
 τας ἐπεδείκνυε. καὶ πρῶτον μὲν αὐτῶν ἐσκόπει,
 πότερὰ

all men to be fools who troubled themselves with inquiries into heavenly things, and ask'd such inquirers whether they had attain'd a perfect knowledg of human things, since they search'd into heavenly things; or if they could think themselves wise in neglecting that which concern'd them, to employ themselves in that which was above their capacity to understand.

Lastly, as a further evidence of his *free-thinking*, SOCRATES had the common fate of *free-thinkers*, to be calumniated in his life-time for an *Atheist* (tho the God APOLLO by his oracle declar'd him the *wisest man upon earth*) and at length suffer'd that punishment for *free-thinking*, which knavery and folly, whenever they are arriv'd to a due pitch, and are well confederated together, are ever ready to inflict on all those who have the honesty and courage to endeavour to imitate him.

(2.) PLATO seeing the fate of SOCRATES, was more politick in his conversation, and never talk'd publicly against the Gods and Religion of his country; yet he was no less a *free-thinker*, and *thought* himself into notions so contrary to those which were receiv'd or known in Greece, that some Christians have suppos'd him to be divinely inspir'd; and others, to have read the books of the Old Testament. He has so many passages in his

πότερα ποτὲ νομίσαντες ἱκανῶς ἤδη τῶν θρώ-
πινα εἶδέναι, ἔρχονται ἐπὶ τὸ περὶ τῶν τοιού-
των φροντίζειν. ἢ τὰ μὲν ἀνθρώπινα παρέντες,
τὰ δαιμόνια δὲ σκοπῶντες, ἡγῶνται τὰ προ-
εήκοντα πράττειν. Xenophont. Opera. Ed.
Par. p. 710.

his writings so agreeable to the truths of the Gospel, that * CELSUS, the great adversary of Christianity, charges our *blessed Lord* himself with borrowing his doctrine from PLATO. ORIGEN indeed very well defends our *blessed Lord* from CELSUS's charge, by saying, † That CELSUS deserves to be laugh'd at when he affirms JESUS had read PLATO; who was, says he, bred and born among the Jews, and was so far from having been taught Greek letters, that he was not taught Hebrew Letters, as the scriptures testify. But he is so far from disowning an agreement between Platonism and Christianity, that a great part of his book against CELSUS consists in showing the conformity between them. Likewise AMELIUS, a Heathen Platonist, who flourish'd in the third century, upon reading the first verses of St. JOHN the Evangelist, cry'd out, ‡ By JOVE this Barbarian is of our master PLATO's opinion! Moreover, the great conformity between Platonism and Christianity made many Platonists become Christians, and many of the primitive Christians become Platonists; and was the cause that several of PLATO's notions were afterwards esteem'd fundamental articles of

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Christian

* Origen. contra Cels. p. 286.

† Τις δὲκ αὖν, ἢ μετρίως ἐπιστάνειν τοῖς πράγμασι γυνάμεν^Θ τὸν Κέλσον γελάσαι, ἀκῶν ὅτι Ἰησὺς (ὁ παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις γεγενημέν^Θ ἢ ἀνατεθραμμέν^Θ, ἢ μηδεμιαν θήκας, ἢ μόνον τὰ Ἑλλήνων, ἀλλ' ἔδε τὰ Ἑβραίων, ὅπερ ἢ αἱ φιλαλήθεις μαρτυροῦσι γράφαι τῶν περὶ αὐτόν) ἀνέγνω Πλατῶνα. Ibid.

‡ Per Jovem barbarus iste cum nostro Platone sentit Apud Reeve's Apologies, in his dissert. upon Justin Martyr.

Christian faith; and gave ground to zealous Christians to forge several things under P L A T O's name, yet more conformable to the truths of their *holy Religion* (as for * instance the thirteenth letter to D I O N Y S I U S, printed in his works) with *which*, and *others of the like nature*, they had great success in the conversion of the heathen world.

(3.) A R I S T O T L E, to whom the Popish Church for many centuries past has been no less oblig'd for † *Articles of faith*, than the primitive Church was to P L A T O, during the life of his pupil and patron A L E X A N D E R the Great, read to his scholars the effects of his *free-thinking*: but after the death of A L E X A N D E R, E U R I M E D O N a priest accus'd him of impiety for ‡ *introducing some Philosophical assertions contrary to the Religion of the Athenians*. And he was forc'd to steal privately from Athens; from whence he went to Chalcis; giving this reason to his friends, § *that he left Athens, that he might not give the Athenians occasion to commit again the same wickedness they committed against S O C R A T E S, and that they might not be guilty of a double crime against Philosophy*.

(4.) E P I-

* Cudworth's *Intell. Syst.* p. 403

† *Senza Aristotele noi mancavamo di molti Articoli di Fede*. The celebrated saying of Cardinal Palavicino.

‡ *Diog. Laert. vita Arist.*

§ Ἀπίωμεν ἀπο τῶν Ἀθηνῶν, ἵνα μὴ πρό-
φασιν δώμεν Ἀθηναίοις τῶν δεύτερον ἀγ-
ῶνα λαβεῖν παραπλήσιον τῷ κατὰ Σωκράτους,
ἢ ἵνα μὴ δεύτερον εἰς φιλοσοφίαν ἀσεβήσω-
σιν. p. 51. Origen. contra Celsum, p. 51.

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(4.) EPICURUS has in all ages been distinguish'd as a great *free-thinker*, and not less as a man of virtue among the learned; in which last he seems to have exceeded all other Philosophers. For he was not only eminent for his ^{*} *piety* towards his parents, his *kindness* to his brethren, his *meekness* to his servants, his *humanity* to all, his *love* to his country, and his *chastity*, *temperance*, and *frugality*; but for that most divine of all virtues, and wherein the greatest pleasure of human life consists, and of which an ill man is incapable, *viz.* *friendship*. He had that noble quality in such perfection himself, and cultivated it so much in his followers, that the succession of his school continu'd many hundred years after the succession of the schools of all the other Philosophers fail'd, without that faction and division which was more or less in them, and contributed to their more early dissolution. CICERO, tho a great adversary to his philosophical opinions, and who in the person of † COTTA has thoroughly baffled his *system of chance*, gives him this noble testimony, ‡ That EPICURUS declares it to be his opinion, that of all things which wisdom can procure towards a happy life, friend-

* Diog. Laert. in vitâ Epicuri

† De Nat. Deor. l. 1.

‡ Epicurus ita dicit, Omnium rerum, quas ad beatè vivendum sapientia comparaverit, nihil esse majus amicitia, nihil uberius, nihil jucundius. Neque verò hoc oratione solum, sed multo magis vitâ & factis & moribus comprobavit. Quod quàm magnum sit, fida veterum declarant fabula; in quibus tam multis, tamque variis, ab ultima antiquitate repetitis, tria vix amicorum paria reperiuntur, ut ad Orestem pervenias, profectus a Theſeo. At vero Epicurus una in domo, & ea quidem angusta, quàm magnos, quantâque amoris conspiratione consentientes tenuit amicorum greges! Quod sit etiam nunc ab Epicureis. De Finibus, &c. l. 1. ad finem.

friendship is the noblest, most extensive, and delicious pleasure. And this he did not only assert in his writings, but gave a practical proof of it in his life and conversation. How great a commendation this is, appears from the rare instances of friendship, of which the mythology of the ancients, as voluminous and full of variety as it is, will hardly afford us three, from THESEUS's time down to ORESTES. But oh! what a numerous, what an harmonious company of friends did EPICURUS croud into his own little habitation! And the Epicureans follow his example to this day.

But we Christians ought still to have a higher veneration of EPICURUS for this virtue of friendship than CICERO: because even our holy Religion it self does not any where particularly require of us that virtue. For as Bishop TAYLOR in his *Treatise of friendship* very justly observes, * the word friendship in the sense we commonly mean by it, is not so much as nam'd in the New Testament; and our Religion takes no notice of it. You think it strange; but read on, before you spend so much as the beginning of a passion or a wonder upon it. There is mention made of friendship with the world, and it is said to be enmity with God; but the word is no where else nam'd, or to any other purpose, in all the New Testament. It speaks of friends often; but by friends are meant our acquaintance, or our kindred, the relatives of our family, or our fortune, or our sect; something of society, or something of kindness there is in it; a tenderness of appellation and civility, a relation made by gifts, or by duty, by services and subjection: and I think

I have

* Pag. 35. at the end of his *Solemick Works*.

of FREE-THINKING. 109

I have reason to be confident, that the word friend is no otherwise used in the Gospels, or Epistles, or Acts of the Apostles.

(5.) PLUTARCH is the most known author of all the ancients. His works are translated into all the modern languages, and by consequence his learning and virtue display'd before the eyes of all that read any books. And tho he was a Heathen priest, yet he preserv'd his understanding free, and was not misled by the gain of his profession into *superstition*, nor so far engag'd in the craft of his trade as to conceal his opinion of the mischief thereof. Says he, in his *Treatise of superstition*, * *Atheism brings men to an unconcernedness and indifferency of temper: for the design of those who deny a God, is to ease themselves of his fear. But superstition (by which the Greeks meant † the fear of God, and which THEOPHRASTUS in his Characters expressly defines so) appears by its name to be a distemper'd opinion and conceit, productive of such mean and abject apprehensions, as debase and break a man's spirit. For tho he thinks justly, that there are divine powers; yet so erroneous is his judgment, that he thinks they are sour and vindictive beings. Atheism is only false reasoning, while superstition is not only false reasoning, but superadds a passion, viz. fear, which is destitute both of courage and reason, and renders us stupid, distracted and unactive. But of all fears, none confound a man like the religionary fear. He fears not the sea, who never goes to sea; nor a battel,*
who

* *Morals. in English, vol. I. p. 162. &c.*

† This was the common definition of *Superstition* likewise among the Romans. Hence Horace says, *Quone malo mentem concussa? timore deorum.*

who follows not the camp; nor robbers, who stir not abroad; nor malicious informers, who is a poor man; nor emulation, who leads a private life; nor earthquakes, who dwells in Gaul, nor thunder-bolts, who dwells in Ethiopia. But he who fears the divine powers, fears every thing, the land, the sea, the air, the sky, the dark, the light, a sound, a silence, a dream. Even slaves forget their masters in their sleep; sleep lightens the irons of the fetter'd; their angry sores, mortify'd gangrenes, and pinching pains allow them some intermission at night. But superstition will give no truce at night, nor suffer the poor soul so much as to breathe, or look up, or respite her sour and dismal thoughts of God a moment. Neither have they, when awake, sense enough to slight and smile at all this; nor are they in the least apprehensive, that nothing of all that terrify'd them was real; but still fear an empty shadow, which could never mean them ill, and cheat themselves afresh at noon-day. In a word, the thought of death it self puts no end to this vain and foolish fear, but it transcends those limits, and extends its fears beyond the grave, adding to it the conceit of immortal ills; and after respite from past sorrows, fancies it shall next enter upon never-ending ones. I know not what gates of hell open themselves from beneath; rivers of fire, together with Stygian torrents, present themselves to view; a gloomy darkness appears full of ghastly specters and horrid shapes, with dreadful aspects and doleful groans, together with judges, tormentors, pits and caverns full of miseries and woes.

He satyrizes likewise the publick forms of devotion, which yet are such, as in almost all countries

of FREE-THINKING. III

countries pass for the true worship of God. Says he, in the same discourse, * O wretched Grecians, who bring into Religion that frightful mien of sordid and vilifying devotion, ill-favour'd humiliation and contrition, abject looks and countenances, consternations, prostrations, disfigurations; and in the act of worship, distortions, constrain'd and painful postures of the body, wry faces, beggarly tones, mummings, grimaces, cringings, and the rest of this kind.

(6.) VARRO, the most learned of all the Romans, speaking of their Theology, said † that it contain'd many fables below the dignity and nature of immortal beings, such for instance, as Gods begotten and proceeding from other Gods heads, legs, thighs, and blood. He likewise affirm'd, ‡ There were many things false in Religion, which it was not convenient for the vulgar to know; and again, some things which, tho' false, yet it was expedient they should be believ'd by them. Upon which discovery of his free-thinking, St. AUSTIN, who records the passage, says, § That VARRO herein discovers the whole secret of statesmen and politicians. VARRO also gives this reason why he treats in his writings of human things before divine, because

* As translated in the *Characteristicks*, vol. 3. p. 126.

† *Multa sunt contra dignitatem & naturam Immortalium ficta. In hoc enim est, ut deus alius ex capite, alius ex femore sit, alius ex guttis sanguinis natus.* Aug. de Civ. Dei. l. 6. c. 5.

‡ *Multa esse vera quæ vulgo scire non sit utile, & quædam quæ tametsi falsa sint, aliter estimare populum expediat.* Ibid. l. 4. c. 31.

§ *Totum consilium prodidit sapientum, per quos civitates & populi regerentur.* Ibid. l. 4. c. 31.

* *because Citys are before the Gods they have establish'd, as the Painter is before the picture he makes.*

(7.) The grave and wise CATO the Censor will for ever live in that noble *free-thinking* saying recorded by CICERO, which shows that he understood the whole mystery of the Roman Religion as by law establish'd. † *I wonder, said he, how one of our priests can forbear laughing when he sees another.*

(8.) CICERO, that consummate Philosopher and noble patriot, tho he was a *priest* and *consul*, and executed other publick offices (which usually makes men more cautious and less sincere) gave the greatest proof of his *free-thinking*. He not only profess'd the *Academick* or *Sceptrick* philosophy, which oblig'd him to ‡ *examine the doctrines of all philosophers*, that he might see whether there was certainty in any of their schemes; but wrote *two treatises*, one of the *Nature of the Gods*, and the other concerning *Divination*: in the former of which, he has endeavour'd to show the weakness of all the arguments of the *Stoicks* (who were the greatest *Theists* of antiquity) for the being of the Gods; and in the latter has destroy'd the whole reveal'd Religion of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, by showing the imposture of all their miracles, and weakness of the other reasons on which it was pretended to be

* *Quia civitates Diis, quos ipsa instituerunt, ut pictor tabella, priores sunt. Apud Sartorii Hypocritis Gentilium. p. 7.*

† *Mirari se aiebat, quod non videret haruspex, cum haruspicem vidisset. Opera Ed. Gron. p. 3806.*

‡ *Qui sequuntur disciplinam Academicam, omnes disciplinas iis percipere necesse est, De Nat. Deor. l. 1.*

be founded. C I C E R O likewise gives us his own *picture* and *that* of the greatest part of the Philosophers (as he was well qualify'd to do, having read over the writings of them all, and convers'd with the most eminent of those who liv'd in his own time) when he produces this as an instance of a *probable opinion*, * That *they who study philosophy don't believe there are any Gods*; that is, that there existed no such Gods as were believ'd by the people. Again in his first book of *Tusculan Questions*, he denies, in many places, all future *punishments*: and after having mention'd the various † *notions* of several *Philosophers* about the nature of the soul, he concludes, *that there can be nothing after death*, if any of their notions be true. And as to P L A T O's arguments for the immortality of the soul, says he to his *diagolist* A T T I C U S (or his auditor, as some conceive) ‡ *Let us not produce them, and let us lay aside all our hopes of immortality*. By which A T T I C U S understood C I C E R O to deny the immortality of the soul, as is evident from his answer which follows: *What, says A T T I C U S, do you disappoint me, after you had rais'd in me such an expectation of a proof of the immortality of the soul? Truly, I had rather be mistaken with P L A T O, whom I know how much you esteem, and whom I admire on your authority, than be in the right with others.* §

H

And

* *Hujusmodi est probabile—Eos, qui de philosophia operam, non arbitrari deos esse.* Opera Ed Gron. p. 157.

† *His sententiis omnibus nihil post mortem pertinere ad quenquam potest.* p. 3433.

‡ *Platonis rationem pratermitamus, & hanc totam spem immortalitatis relinquamus.* p. 3438

§ *An tu cum me in summam expectationem adduxeris: deseris? Errare mehercule malo cum Platone, quem tu quam*
quandi

And here, because C I C E R O's works are so frequently cited against *free-thinkers* both from the pulpit and the press, and his example recommended for their conviction; it may not be amiss utterly to disarm the enemies of *free-thinking* of C I C E R O's authority, by briefly discovering a common imposition on the world, begun by some men of learning (either thro want of discernment or want of honesty) and continu'd by the less learned, out of deference to the authority of the former. C I C E R O's philosophical works are mostly written in *dialogue*, in which philosophers of different sects are introduc'd arguing for their several opinions. Thus the *three books of the Nature of the Gods*, are a dialogue between an *Epicurean*, a *Stoick*, and an *Academick*; and his *two books of Divination* are a dialogue between his brother Q U I N T U S, who personates a *Stoick*, and himself. Now the modern *priests*, whenever they meet with any passage favourable to *superstition*, which C I C E R O puts in the mouth of the *Stoick*, or any false argument which he makes the *Epicurean* use, and which they have thought fit to *sanctify* (such for instance as the *Epicurean arguments* from *innate ideas*, and from *the universal consent of mankind* for the *existence of Gods*, in E P I C U R U S's sense; that is, for *Gods in human shape, who took no care of the world or of human affairs*) they urge it as C I C E R O's own, and would have the reader believe C I C E R O look'd on it as conclusive. Whereas C I C E R O himself is so far from approving what he makes the *Stoick* and *Epicurean* speak, that he does in his discourse of the *Nature of the Gods* endeavour to confute all their

quanti facias scio, & quem ex ore tuo admiro, quam cum istis vera sentire.

of FREE-THINKING. 115

their arguments under the person of an *Academick* (of which sect he every where professes himself) and in his discourse of *Divination* baffles all the *Stoical* arguments for superstition , openly under his own name. So that C I C E R O is as unfairly dealt with , whenever he is cited against *free-thinking* , as the *priests* themselves would be , did any one cite as their sentiments what they make *Deists* , *Scepticks* , and *Socinians* say , in the *dialogues* they compose against those sects.

The true method of discovering the sentiments of C I C E R O , is to see what he says himself , or under the person of an *Academick* ; as the true method of knowing what sentiments our divines maintain in their *dialogues* , is to see what they make their orthodox dialogist say. And if C I C E R O 's readers will follow this rule of common sense in understanding him , they will find him as great a *free-thinker* as he was a Philosopher , an Orator , a Man of Virtue , and a Patriot. And they will never meet with any passages which in the least favour *superstition* , but what he plainly throws out to save himself from danger , or to show his rhetorical ability on any argument , or employs in his *Orations* to recommend himself to the *Roman mob* , who , like all other *mobs* , were extremely superstitious , and differ'd not from the present generation at *Rome* , but in having a more innocent and less absurd *superstition* . And yet sometimes his zeal against what he took to be *superstition* made him so far forget a *maxim* * of his own , as to speak *that* in his *Orations* which he could only do with perfect safety in an assembly of Philosophers.

H 2

As

* *Quaritur sintne dei, nec no sint. Difficile est negare. Credo, si in concione quaratur: sed in ejuscemodi Sermones, & confessu, facillimum. De nat. Deor. lib. 1.*

As for instance, says he, * I would not have you think, that wicked men, as sometimes on the stage, are by the impulse of the Gods terrify'd by the burning torches of the Furies. Every man's own fraud, his own wickedness, his own villany, his own desperate boldness, puts him beside himself, and disorders his thoughts: these are the Furies which torment the wicked, these the flames, and these the torches. Again he says, † When you harangue the people with malicious eloquence, when you demolish the houses of citizens, when with stones you pelt and drive the most worthy senators from the Forum; when you set fire to your neighbours houses, and burn temples; when you stir up slaves to sedition, and disturb the celebration of religious ordinances; when you know no difference between your wife and your sister, and matter not whose bed you defile; when you act like a madman, when you rage, then you suffer those torments which alone the Gods have ordain'd to punish the wickedness of men. ‡ And again, What evil has he suffer'd by death? unless cheated by
idle

* *Nolite enim putare, ut in scenâ videtis, homines consceleratos, impulsu deorum, terri fieri furiarum tædis ardentibus. Sua quemque fraus, suum facinus, suum scelus, sua audacia de sanitate & mente deturbat; hæ sunt impiorum furia, hæ flamma, hæ faces. p. 1827.*

† *Tu cum furiales in concionibus voces mittis, cum domos civium evertis, cum lapidibus optimos viros Foro pellis, cum ardentes faces in vicinorum tecta iactas, cum ades sacras inflammas, cum servos concitas, cum sacra ludosque conturbas, cum uxorem sororemque non discernis; cum quod in eas cubile non sentis; cum baccharis, cum furis; tum das eas pœnas, quæ sunt sola hominum sceleri à diis immortalibus constituta p. 1622.*

‡ *Quid illi mali mors attulit? Nisi forte inepti ac fabulæ supplicia percipere, ac plures illic offendisse inimicos, quam hic reliquisse. Quid tandem ei aliud eripuit mors, præter sensum doloris? p. 1277.*

of FREE-THINKING. 117

idle stories and fables, we can think he undergoes any punishment in hell, and that he has found more enemies there than he left behind him. What therefore has death taken from him but the sense of pain?

So that if C I C E R O's works come once to be generally read, as of all human writings they best deserve, it will be found that they no more tend to the service of any *priestly purpose* whatsoever, than the writings of the fathers of the Church (to whom the laity us'd to be refer'd to find what was not in them) do the purpose of any Church now upon the face of the earth.

(9.) C A T O of *Utica* has this great character from V E L L E J U S P A T E R C U L U S, * that *he was a man of so great virtue, that he was the very picture of it; and in every thing by his wisdom approach'd more to the Gods than to men. He never did any good actions for the reputation of doing them, but because he could not do otherwise. He thought nothing reasonable but what was just; and being free from all the defects of men, had fortune in his power.* And the inimitable L U C A N has rais'd a noble monument, not only to his wisdom and virtue, but to his *free-thinking*. And I expect your thanks for giving it you in the excellent translation of a most ingenious Author, as well as in the original. On the occasion of C A T O's marching at the head of an army thro the desarts of *Africa* near the temple of J U P I T E R A M M O N, the poet says,

H 3

His

* *Homo virtuti simillimus, & per omnia ingenio diis quam hominibus propior, qui nunquam rectè fecit, ut facere videretur, sed quia aliter facere non poterat; cuique id solum visum est rationem habere, quod haberet justitiam omnibus humanis vitiis immunis, semper fortunam in sua potestate habuit. L. 2. p. 35.*

* His host (as crowds are superstitious still)
 Curious of fate, of future good and ill,
 And fond to prove prophetick AMMON's skill;
 Intreat their leader to the Gods would go,
 And from this oracle Rome's fortune know:
 But LABIENUS chief the thought approv'd,
 And thus the common suit to CATO mov'd.

Chance and the fortune of the way, he said,
 Have brought JOVE's sacred counsels to our aid;
 This greatest of the Gods, this mighty chief,
 In each distress shall be a sure relief;
 Shall point the distant dangers from afar,
 And teach the future fortunes of the war.
 To thee, O CATO, pious, wise, and just,
 Their dark decrees the cautious Gods shall trust;
 To thee their fore-determin'd will shall tell:
 Their will has been thy law, and thou hast kept it well.
 Fate bids thee now the noble thought improve;
 Fate brings thee here to meet and talk with JOVE.
 Inquire betimes what various chance shall come
 To impious CÆSAR, and thy native Rome;
 Try to avert at least thy country's doom.
 Ask if these arms our freedom shall restore;

Or

* ——— Comitesque Catonem

Orant, expleat Libycum memorata per orbem
 Numina, de fama tam longi judicet ævi.
 Maximus hortator scrutandi voce deorum
 Eventus Labienus erat. Sors obtulit, inquit,
 Et fortuna via, tam magni numinis ora,
 Consiliumque dei: tanto duce possumus uti
 Per Syries, bellique datos cognoscere casus.
 Nam cui creuliderim superos arcana daturus,
 Dicturosque magis, quam sancto vera Catoni?
 Certe vita tibi semper directa supernas
 Ad leges, sequerisque Deum. Datur ecce loquendi
 Cum Jove libertas: inquire in fata nefandi
 Caesaris, & patria venturos excute mores:
 Jure suo populis uti, legumque licebit,

Am

of FREE-THINKING. 119

Or else, if laws and right shall be no more.
Be thy great breast with sacred knowledge fraught,
To lead us in the wandring maze of thought:
Thou that to vertue ever wer't inclin'd,
Learn what it is, how certainly defin'd,
And leave some perfect rule to guide mankind.

Full of the God that dwelt within his breast,
The Hero thus his secret mind express'd,
And inborn truths reveal'd; truths which might well
Become ev'n oracles themselves to tell.

Where would thy fond, thy vain enquiry go?
What mystick fate, what secret wouldst thou know?
Is it a doubt if death should be my doom,
Rather than live till kings and bondage come,
Rather than see a tyrant crown'd in Rome!
Or would'st thou know, if, what we value here,
Life, be a trifle hardly worth our care?
What by old age and length of days we gain,
More than to lengthen out the sense of pain?
Or if this world with all its forces join'd,
The universal malice of mankind,
Can shake or hurt the brave and honest mind?
If stable virtue can her ground maintain,
While fortune feebly threatens and frowns in vain?
If good in lazy speculations dwell,

H 4

And

An bellum civile perit. Tua pectora sacra
Voce reple: dura saltem virtutis amator
Quare quid est virtus, & posce exemplar honesti.
Ille Deo plenus, tacita quam mente gerebat,
Effudit dignas adytis è pectore voces:
Quid quæri Labiene jubes? An liber in armis
Occubuisse velim potius, quam regna videre?
An sit vita nihil, sed longam differat ætas?
An noceat vis ulla bono? Fortunaque perdat
Opposita virtute minas? Laudandaque velle
Sit satis, & nunquam successu crescat honestum?
Scimus, & hoc nobis non altius inferet Ammon.
Hæremus cunctis superis, temploque sacente

And barely be the will of doing well?
 If right be independent of success,
 And conquest cannot make it more or less?
 Are these, my friends, the secrets you would know,
 Those doubts for which to oracles we go?
 'Tis known, 'tis plain, 'tis all already told,
 And horned AMMON can no more unfold.
 From God deriv'd, to God by nature join'd,
 We act the dictates of his mighty mind:
 And tho the priests are mute and temples still,
 God never wants a voice to speak his will.
 When first we from the teeming womb were brought,
 With inborn precepts then our souls were fraught,
 And then the maker his new creatures taught.
 Then when he form'd and gave us to be men,
 He gave us all our useful knowledg then.
 Canst thou believe the vast eternal mind,
 Was e'er to Syrts and Lybian sands confin'd?
 That he would chuse this waste, this barren ground,
 To teach the thin inhabitants around,
 And leave his truth in wilds and desarts drown'd?
 Is there a place that God would chuse to love
 Beyond this earth, the seas, yon heaven above,
 And virtuous minds, the noblest throne of J O V E?
 Why seek we farther then? Behold around,
 How all thou seest does with the God abound,
 J O V E is alike in all, and always to be found!

Let

Nil facimus non sponte Dei: nec vocibus ullis
 Numen eget: dixitque semel nascentibus auctor
 Quicquid scire licet: steriles nec legit arenas,
 Ut caneret paucis, mersitque hoc pulvere verum:
 Estne Dei sedes, nisi terra, & pontus, & aer,
 Et cælum, & virtus? Superos quid quarimus ultra?
 Jupiter est quodcumque vides, quocumque moveris.
 Sortilegis egeant dubij, semperque futuris
 Casibus ancipites: me non oracula certum.
 Sed mors certa facit: pavidò, fortique cadendum est.
 Hoc satis est dixisse Jovem Sic ille profatur:

Ser-

of FREE-THINKING. 121

Let those weak minds that live in doubt and fear,
To juggling priests for oracles repair;
One certain hour of death to each decreed,
My fix'd, my certain soul from doubt has freed:
The coward and the brave are doom'd to fall;
And when J O V E told this truth, he told us all.

So spoke the Hero; and to keep his word,
Nor AMMON, nor his oracle explor'd;
But left the croud at freedom to believe,
And take such answers as the priest should give.
Foremost on foot he treads the burning sand,
Bearing his arms in his own patient hand;
Scorning another's weary neck to press,
Or in a lazy chariot loll at ease.
The panting soldier to his toil succeeds,
Where no command, but great example leads.
Sparing of sleep, still for the rest he wakes,
And at the fountain last his thirst he slakes;
Whene'er by chance some living stream is found,
He stands, and sees the cooling draughts go round;
Stays till the last and meanest drudg be past,
And till his slaves have drank, disdains to taste.
If true good men deserve immortal fame,
If virtue, tho' distress'd, be still the same;
Whate'er our fathers greatly dar'd to do,
Whate'er they bravely bore and wisely knew,
Their virtues all are his, and all their praise his due.

H 5

Who

*Servatâque fide templi discedit ab aris,
Non exploratum populis Ammonia relinquens.
Ipse manu sua pila gerens, præcedit anhelis
Militis ora pedes: monstrat tolerare labores.
Non jubet: & nullâ vehitur cervice supinus,
Carpentove sedens. Somni parcissimus ipse est,
Ultimus hauster aquæ: cum tandem fonte reperto
Indigna cogatur latices potare juvenis,
Stat, dum lixa bibat. Si veris magna paratur
Fama bonis, & si successu nuda remoto
Inspicitur virius, quicquid laudamus in ullo*

Mat

Whoe'er with battels fortunately fought ?
 Whoe'er with Roman blood such honours bought ?
 This triumph, this on Lybia's utmost bound,
 With death and desolation compass'd round,
 To all thy glories, POMPEY, I prefer,
 Thy trophies and thy third triumphal Car,
 To MARIUS mighty name, and great Ju-
 gurthine war.

His country's father here, O Rome, behold,
 Worthy thy temples, priests, and shrines of gold:
 Ife'er thou break thy lordly master's chain,
 If liberty be e'er restor'd again,
 Him thou shalt place in the divine abodes,
 Swear by his holy name, and rank him with thy
 Gods.

(10.) SENECA, whose excellent *Morals* are
 in most *Englishmens* hands, and whose virtue and
 learning are so celebrated, has many passages in
 his works which show that he was a great *free-thinker*;
 and particularly had a noble notion of the
worship of the Gods: for which some of the mo-
 dern Priesthood would not only call a man who
 should talk so now a *free-thinker*, but an *Atheist*.
 Says he, declaring how the Gods are to be wor-
 ship'd. * *Let us not suffer any one to light lamps to*

the

*Majorum, fortuna fuit. Quis Marte secundo,
 Quis tantum meruit populorum sanguine nomen ?
 Hunc ego per Syrtes, Libyaque extrema triumphum
 Ducere maluerim, quam ter Capitolia curru
 Scandere Pompeii, quam frangere colla Jugurtha.
 Ecce parens verus patria, dignissimus aris
 Roma tuis, per quem nunquam jurare pudebit.
 Et quem, si steteris unquam cervico soluta,
 Tunc olim factura Deum.*

Lucon l. 9.

* *Accendere aliquem lucernam sabbatis prohibeamus, quo-
 niam nec Dii lumine egent, & ne homines quidem fuligine de-*

lectantur

of FREE-THINKING. 123

the Gods upon sabbath-days, because they want no light, and men are not pleas'd with soot. Let us not permit men to perform any morning-devotions, or to sit at the doors of temples. He worships God, who knows him. Let us forbid men to carry any linnen or combs to JUPITER, or hold a looking-glass to JUNO. God has no need of ministers or servants. Why so? Because he himself serves mankind; and is ready to assist every body and every where. Would you render the Gods propitious to you? Be a good man. He honours the Gods sufficiently, who imitates them.

Likewise he says, † *Superstition is a mad error. It fears those who are to be lov'd, and injures those it worships.*

Again, this religious man, like his religious brethren the *Stoicks*, deny'd the immortality of the soul. * *You ought*, says he to MARCIA in comforting her for the death of her son, *to think that he who is dead suffers no evil. All that is feign'd to be*

lectantur. Vetemus salutationibus matutinis fungi, & foribus assidere templorum. Deum colit, qui nocet. Vetemus lintea & strigilis Jovi ferre, & speculum tenere Junoni. Non quaris ministros Deus. Quid ni? Ipse humano generi ministrat: ubique & omnibus praesto est. Vis Deos propitiare? Bonus esto. Satis illos coluit, quisquis imitatus est. Epist. 95.

† *Superstitio insanus est error. Amandos timet, quos colit violat. Epist. 123.*

* *Cogita nullis defunctum malis affici. Illa qua nobis inferos faciunt terribiles, fabulam esse. Nullas imminere mortuis tenebras, nec carcerem, nec flumina flagrantia igne, nec oblivio- nis amnem, nec tribunalia. Luserunt ista Poeta, & vanis nos agitavere terroribus. Mors omnium dolorum & solutio est & finis: ultra quam mala nostra non exeunt, qua nos in illam tranquillitatem in qua antequam nasceremur jacuimus, reponit. Si mortuorum aliquis misereatur, & non natorum misereatur. Conf. ad Marciam, c. 19.*

be so terrible in hell, is but a fable. We know well that the dead are not subject to darkness, nor prisons, nor burning rivers, nor to waters of forgetfulness, nor to any tribunals. The poets have pleas'd themselves in feigning them, and have disturb'd us with vain fears. Death puts an end to all our misery. Beyond that, our misfortunes go not. That places us in the same tranquillity in which we were before we were born. If any one would grieve for those who are dead, he ought to grieve for those who are not yet born.

This freedom of SENECA was so far from lessening the just esteem which the primitive Christians had of his learning and virtue, that they thought to do considerable service to Christianity, by forging a correspondence of * Letters, between St. PAUL and him. These Letters are cited by † St. JEROM and ‡ St. AUSTIN as genuine; and the former was so charm'd with SENECA, as to put him in his * list of saints.

(II.) SOLOMON is declar'd by the word of God to be the wisest of men, and some of his writings are authoriz'd as part of God's word to us, in which I find such instances of free-thinking, that had he liv'd in our days, and wrote in the same manner, he would have been calumniated as an Atheist, unless he had recommended himself to the priest by building of Churches.

He

* Yet extant, and are printed in several of the old editions of Seneca's works. and very lately in Fabricius's Codex Apocryphus Novi Test. p. 892.

† In Catal. Script. Eccl.

‡ Epist. 54. ad Macedonium.

* In Catal. Sanctorum. In Cat. Script. Eccl.

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He says, One generation passes away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to its place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about towards the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to its circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. All which is an elegant description of the eternity of the world, not much unlike that of the Poet MANILIUS:

Lib. 1.

*Omnia mortali mutantur lege creata:
Nec se cognoscunt terra vertentibus annis.
Exuta variant faciem per sacula gentes.
At manet incolumis mundus, suaque omnia servat,
Qua nec longa dies auget, minuitve senectus,
Nec motus puncto currit, cursuque fatigat:
Idem semper erit, quoniam semper fuit idem.
Non alium videre patres, aliumve nepotes
Aspicient; Deus est, qui non mutatur in avum.*

Again, SOLOMON says, I said in my heart Eccl. 3. concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God 18.22. might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast. for all is vanity. All go to one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. * Who

know

* So this verse is render'd in the Vulg. and by Castalio. And indeed the context shew; it ought to be render'd so,

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knoweth that the spirit of a man goeth upwards, and that the spirit of a beast goeth downwards to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man rejoice in his own works, for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? In another place he argues against a future state, and obviates the common argument for it, drawn from *cur bonis male, & malis bene*, in these words: *In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.* Lastly, he says, *The dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; and that there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave.* These passages (which some without any manner of foundation suppose to be the words of an *Epicurean* introduc'd by SOLOMON) plainly show, that when SOLOMON speaks elsewhere in this book of a *judgment*, he means a *judgment in this world*, (agreeably to the whole tenor of the *Jewish Religion & Laws* where all the rewards & punishments promis'd & threatned are temporal) and not a *judgment in the world to come*, as Christians understand that *word* in the New Testament. But it is possible that you, who are fully perswaded, as you have reason to be, of the immortality of the soul upon the authority of JESUS-CHRIST who has brought immortality to light, may be surpriz'd that so wise a man as SOLOMON should be led by his *free-thinking* to deny so important a truth. Wherefore, for the vindication of SOLOMONS wisdom in this point, I observe, 1st. That the immortality of the soul was no where plain in the Old Testament; was deny'd by the *Sadducees*, the most philosophical part of the Jewish nation, and of whom their magistrates principally consisted;

Eccl. 7.

14.

9. 3. 10.

12. 14

of FREE-THINKING. 127

sisted; was thought doubtful by most sects of the Grecian philosophers, and deny'd by the Stoicks, the most religious sect of them all; * *had never*, according to CICERO, *been asserted in writing by any Greek author extant in his time before* PHERECYDES of the Island Syrus; and was † *first taught by the Egyptians*; or, according to our learned SIR JOHN MARSHAM, was ‡ *their most noble invention*. No wonder therefore, if SOLOMON, who liv'd before most of these, reason'd in the same manner with the learned men of his own country, and the more learned Philosophers of the neighbouring nations. 2dly. I observe, that the true principles, upon which the immortality of the soul depends, are only to be fetch'd from the New Testament. We learn in the Old Testament, that ADAM by eating the forbidden fruit subjected himself and all his posterity to *death*: but the New Testament teaches us to understand by *death*, *eternal life in misery*; and from thence we know, that God had but one way to put mankind in a capacity of enjoying immortal happiness, viz. by sending JESUS-CHRIST into the world, who (as God and man, and God's son, and the same numerical being with that God whose son he was, and yet personally distinct from him) only could by his sufferings and death (tho God can neither dye nor suffer) give an infinite satisfaction to an infinitely offended and infinitely merciful God, appease his wrath, and thereby save the *elect*. Now I would ask, how any man without revelation could know that *death* signify'd *eternal life in misery*; or that

ADAM'S

* *Pherecydes Syrius (quod literis exstet) primum dixit animos hominum esse sempiternos.* Tusc. Quæst. Edit. Davissi. p. 33.

† *Herodotus.* Edit. Genevæ, p. 123.

‡ *Chron. Canon.* p. 21.

ADAM'S posterity should be liable to eternal damnation for his transgression; or how without revelation so wonderful a scheme as this *Gospel-scheme* (which alone lays the foundation of a happy immortality) could enter into the *wisest* man's imagination?

(12.) The *Prophets* (who had the most learned Education among the *Jews*, and were bred up in *Universities* call'd *Schools of the Prophets*, where they learnt to prophecy, and among other means to ^{*} obtain the *Prophetick spirit*, play'd upon musical instruments and drank wine) were great *free-thinkers*, and have written with as great liberty against the establish'd Religion of the *Jews* (which the people look'd on as the institution of God himself) as if they believ'd it was all imposture; and with greater liberty against their *inspir'd priests and Prophets*, than the *Author* of the *Rights of the Christian Church* has done against the *uninspir'd priests and Prophets* of our *Israel*.

Isaiah 1.
11. 14.

1. As to the establish'd Religion of the *Jews*, they say, *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed Beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath requir'd this at your hands,*

10

^{*} In *Judaorum sacrificiis incipiebant hymni & eborea in laudem numinis, propterea ut videatur, quod post hilaritatem illam quam è vini haustu conceperant, aptiores viderentur sacro illi entusiasmo percipiendò quo sacra illa essent peragenda. Multis hac probari poterant, ni vidissem orationem potius esse contrahendam. Et vero corporeis id genus auxiliis *Judaos* usos esse constat ad concipiendum spiritum *Propheticum*. Sic musicam adhibuit *Elisæus*, cibum filii *Esavi*, & vinum senior *Isaacus*. *Dodwell* de *Jure Laic.* p. 359.*

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to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination to me, the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts, my Soul hateth: they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them. . . To what purpose cometh incense from Sheba? And the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me. Nay, they make God say plainly, I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices... I gave them statutes, saith the Lord, that were not good, and judgments whereby they could not live... I despise your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies; tho ye offer me burnt-offerings, and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not bear the melody of thy viols.

2. As to the priests and prophets , they say , the
priest and the prophet have erred thro strong drink , Isa. 27. 7.
they are swallow'd up of wine , they are out of the
way thro strong drink , they err in vision , they
fumble in judgment... The priests said not , where Jer. 2. 8.
is the Lord ? And they that handle the law , knew
me not : the pastors have transgress'd against me ,
and the prophets prophecy'd by Baal , and walked
after things that do not profit... The prophets pro- 5. 31.
phesy falsly , and the priests bear rule by their means ,
and my people love to have it so... From the prophet 6. 13.
even unto the priest every one dealeth falsly . Then 8. 10.
the Lord said unto me , the prophets prophecy lyes in
my name ; I sent them not , neither have I com- 14. 4.
manded

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manded them; neither spake unto them: they prophecy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of naught, and the deceit of their heart,...

23. 11. Both prophet and priest are profane... I have seen
13. folly in the prophets of Samaria, they prophecy'd in
14. Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. I have
seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible
thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lyes:
they strengthen also the hands of evil doers, that none
doth return from his wickedness: they are all of
them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof

Jer. 23. 15. as Gomorrah... From the prophets of Jerusalem pro-
16. faneness is gone forth thro all the land... Thus saith
the Lord of hosts, hearken not unto the words of the
prophets that prophecy unto you; they make you
vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and
20. not out of the mouth of the Lord... I have not sent
these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to
them, yet they prophecy'd. They prophecy lyes in
25. 26. my name, yea they are prophets of deceit... I am
30. against the prophets, saith the Lord... Hearken not
27. 16. 15. to your prophets, for they prophecy a lye unto you;
but serve the King of Babylon... The enemy have
entred the gates of Jerusalem, for the sins of her pro-
phets and iniquity of her priests, that have shed the
blood of the just in the midst of her... Prophecy against
the prophets. There is a conspiracy of her prophets
like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have de-
22. 25. vour'd souls: they have taken the treasure and pre-
28. cious things: they have made many widows. They
have divined, saying, thus saith the Lord, when
the Lord hath not spoken... As troops of robbers wait
for a man, so the company of priests murder in the
way by consent; for they commit leudness.. The
priests teach for hire, and the prophets divine for
mony; yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say,
is not the Lord among us?

These

of FREE-THINKING. 131

These are all such instances of *free-thinking*, that had any *Englishmen* talk'd so in our days, they would have had a place in Dr. SACHEVEREL's *Tryal*, and in the *Representation of the Lower House of Convocation*, as proofs of the *Profaneness*, *Blasphemy*, and *Atheism* of the nation.

(13.) Next to the *Prophets* I place JOSEPHUS, who is the most antient uninspir'd evidence now remaining for the authority of the canon of the Old Testament. He was the most learned and polite author the *Jews* ever had, and has wrote a *history* of his Country, not much inferiour in stile, order, and perspicuity, to the best of the *Grecian* or *Roman* histories; insomuch that in reading him I have often wish'd he had had a better subject, than such an illiterate, barbarous, and ridiculous * people.

Now JOSEPHUS is allow'd by the *priests* to be a great *Latitudinarian*, and addicted to the general

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opi-

* The reverend Dr. South admirably well describes the *Jews* in part. when he says, *They were all a long a cross, odd, untoward sort of People, and such as God seems to have espous'd to himself upon the very same account that Socrates did Xantippe, only for her extreme ill conditions above all that he could possibly find, or pick out of that sex; and so the fittest both to exercise and declare his admirable patience to the world.* Sermons, vol. 1. p. 539. But our reverend and learned Drs. Spencer and Burnet have describ'd them more at large. Says the first,

Nature form'd the *Jews* above all the other inhabitants of the earth, of a morose, ill-natur'd, and infamously obstinate temper. — They were a barbarous and cruel people. — Superstitious and destitute of almost all literature,

Natura gentem Hebræorum præter cæteros orbis incolas ingenio moroso, difficili. & ad infamiam usque pertinaci, finxit. — Moribus asperis & esseratis. — Gens superstitiosa & omni penè literaturâ destituta.

And

opinions of the excellency of * virtue and goodness, that is, to be a Man of free thought, and a lover of virtue.

A few instances of his *free-thinking* will not be un-

And he adds, to justify God's Institution of the Jewish laws;

That superstition is a stubborn monster, especially when by the darkness of ignorance it takes in fresh barbarity and obstinacy: And therefore God, in dealing with this illiterate and exceedingly superstitious nation, was oblig'd to make allowance for their infirmity, and draw them to himself by a sort of craft, and not by reason. For no brute is more cross-grain'd or requires greater cunning to manage, than the superstitious brute, especially if he be ignorant.

The latter says, That from the laws of the Jews and the Mosaick æconomy, one may judge how gross and stupid they were, and incapable of understanding either the things of this world or the other. Their most wise legislator would never have burden'd Philosophers, or Men capable of divine things, with so many external rites, so many unprofitable ceremonies, so many trifles and things of no consequence. He mix'd nothing spiritual, or abstracted from sense, not so

Contumax autem bellua superstitio, si præsertim ab ignorantie tenebris novam ferociam & contumaciam hauserit. Quando itaque deo jam negotium esset cum populo tam barbaro & superstitioni tam impense dedito; penè necesse fuit, ut aliquid eorum infirmitati daret, eosque dolo quodam (non argumentis) ad seipsum alliceret. Nullum animal superstitioso, rudi præsertim, morosius est, aut majori arte tractandum. *Spencer de Legibus Hebræor.* p. 618, 619.

Ex Hebræorum Legibus & Oeconomia Mosaicâ judicare licet, crassam hebetemque fuisse istius populi indolem: neque rebus naturalibus contemplandis, aut divinis percipiendis, idoneam. Tot ritibus externis, tot ceremoniis infrugiferis, tot minutiis & observationiunculis, viros philosophos aut cælestium dociles, nequaquam onerasset sapientissimus legislator. Nichil intellectuale, aut a sensibus abstractum, neque propriarum

* Dr. Willes's Disc. on Josephus, p. 30

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unacceptable to the reader. He says, * *That CAIN, after a tedious journey thro several countries, took up at length at Nais, and settled his abode: but was so far from mending upon his affliction, that he went rather from bad to worse; abandoning himself to all manner of outrage, without any manner of regard to common justice. He enrich'd himself by rapine and violence; and made choice of the most profligate of monsters for his companions, instructing them in the very mystery of their own profession. He corrupted the simplicity of former times with a novel invention of weights and measures, and exchang'd the innocency of that primitive generosity and candour, for the new tricks of policy and craft. All which seems plainly to suppose men before A D A M.*

He says, † *The Israelites passage of the Red Sea was the same that happen'd to the Macedonians under the command of ALEXANDER at the Pamphilian Sea: in which there was nothing miraculous, if ‡ ALEXANDER himself is to be believ'd.*

I 3

When

much as the immortality of their own souls, in his institutions and religion; and in the rewards and punishments promis'd or threaten'd for the observation or breach of their law, there were none beyond this life, nothing but temporal good and evil: and this not on the account of his own ignorance, but on account of the ignorance, or rather stupidity, of this people.

ptiarum animarum immortalitatem, suis institutis & religioni intexuit; pariterque in præmiis & pœnis, ad legem corroborandam propositis, nihil pollicitus aut minatus est ultra hujus vitæ terminos, atque bona aut mala temporalia: idque non ob suam, sed populi istius ignorantiam, & animorum. ut ità dicam, crassitudinem, Archaeol. Phil. p. 332.

* Jewish Antiq. l. 1. c. 3. L'Estrange's Translation.

† Ibid. l. 2. c. 16.

‡ Litera Alexandri, apud Plutarchum in vita Alex.

When he relates the miraculous appearance of God at * *mount Sinai*, he adds, *that the reader may take this as he pleases.*

Instead of relating the history of NEBUCHADNEZZAR like DANIEL, who says, † *He was driven from men, and did eat grass like Oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles feathers and his nails like birds claws*: JOSEPHUS tells the story thus, ‡ *That NEBUCHADNEZZAR after seven years spent in solitude, and no one daring, during that time, to make any attempt on his Government, God was prevail'd on to reinstate him in the exercise of his kingly power.*

I could cite many other passages of the like nature, but that I may not be tedious, I will give you only one more; and that shall be the most remarkable passage in his whole works, out of his second book against APPION, as it is translated by the reverend * *Dr. WILLES*: *That MOSES from his justice and piety might very well judg that he had God for his guide, and when he was once persuaded of that himself, he did well to persuade the people to think so too; just as the Greeks pretended to have their laws from APOLLO, whether they really thought so or no, or thought that the best way to make them receiv'd of the people.*

To account for this *free-thinking* of JOSEPHUS, the priests themselves have recourse to as free a
so.

* *Jewish Antiq.* l. 3. c. 5.

† *Dan.* 4. 33. 34. 36.

‡ *Antiquities.* l. 10. c. 11.

* *First Disc. on Josephus,* p. 3.

of FREE-THINKING. 135

solution. Our reverend and learned † GREGORY says, JOSEPHUS being desirous that his work might find acceptation with the Gentiles, took diligent heed to make the disposition of his history of such a temper, as that nothing should be propos'd so incredible, as not to bear some congruity with such things which had been known before, and were like to be hereafter.

(14.) ORIGEN (who was the first Christian that had any general literature ; and whose great abilitys, according to a reverend * Divine, wip'd off a very popular objection against Christianity, during the two first centurys, that none but fools were Christians; and on whose learning and piety EUSEBIUS employs the whole sixth book of his ecclesiastical history) was a very great free-thinker; and for that reason was not call'd saint, like some other fathers who seem to have had the true title to that appellation, from their want of learning and excess of zeal. There is likewise another conspicuous testimony of his free-thinking from the great debate in the Christian Church, whether he was damn'd or no; which was at length determin'd by the fifth ‡ General Council in the affirmative, upon the vision of a holy old man who dreams he saw ORIGEN in hell, and upon the request of the then Emperor to have ORIGEN and his opinions damn'd.

(15.) MINUTIUS FELIX, another polite and learned father of the Church, has left us an Apology for the Christian Religion, which a re-

† Gregory's *Posthuma*, p. 32.

* Reeve's *Apol.* in the notes, vol. 2. p. 325.

‡ *Binet du Saint. d'Origene*, p. 191.

verend ‡ author thinks one of *the best books next the Bible*; wherein he, as all understanding Christians must be, appears to have been a great free-thinker.

He has such a noble idea of Christianity as to say, * that *either the Christians were all Philosophers, or all the old Philosophers were Christians.*

And to the heathen objection, † *Why the Christians had no Altars, no Churches, no publick Preaching, nor publick Assemblys*; he answers like a true modern Latitudinarian free-thinking Christian: ‡ *What Church should I build for God, when the whole world cannot contain him? And when I, who am only a man, live unconfin'd, shall I confine the majesty of God in a little house? Is it not more becoming the Deity, to have a Church in our minds and in our hearts? Shall I offer sacrifices and oblations to the Deity of those things he has made for my use, as if I turn'd back on his hands the presents he has made me? this is ingratitude;*
since

‡ Reeve's Pref. before his *Apologys*, p. 1.

* *Aus Christianos Philosophos esse, aut Philosophos fuisse Christianos.* Min. Felix. notis var. p. 155.

† *Cur nullas aras habent, nulla templa, nunquam palam loqui, nunquam liberè congregari?* p. 91.

‡ *Quod templum ei extruam, cum totus hic mundus eum capere non possit? Et cum homo latius maneam, intra unam adiculam vim tanta Majestatis includam? Nonne melius in nostra dedicandus est mentes? In nostro imo consecrandus est pectore? Hostias & victimas domino offeram, quas in usum mei protulit, ut rejiciam ei suum munus? Ingratum est; cum sit litabilis hostia, bonus animus, & pura mens, & sincera conscientia. Igitur qui innocentiam colit, Domino supplicat; qui justitiam, Deo libat: qui fraudibus abstinet, propitiatur Deum; qui hominem periculo subripit, opimam victimam cedit. Hec nostra sacrificia, hac Dei sacra sunt. Sic apud nos religiosior ille est, qui justior.* Ibid. p. 313.

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since all the sacrifice he requires is justice, purity, and sincerity. Therefore he who lives innocently, worships him. He who does justice, sacrifices. He who abstains from injustice, gives full satisfaction to the Deity: and he who saves another from danger, offers the noblest victim. These are our sacrifices, this is our divine service; so that we esteem the honestest man among us the most religious.

As MINUTIUS FELIX thought *Altar*, and *Sacrifice*, *Churches* & *Preaching*, to be no parts of the Christian Religion and Worship, and by consequence a proper priesthood neither essential nor necessary; so he has painted out in very lively colours the mischief of such a priesthood, and shown how happy the world was when there was none. Says he, * *where are there more assignations made, more pimping, more adulterys concerted, than by priests in their Churches and at their Altars? And there is more flaming lust perpetrated in Religious houses than in the publick stews. The Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Grecians, and Egyptians, had flourishing empires without and before there were any orders of priests in the world.*

Lastly, MINUTIUS FELIX understood well both the weak side and knavish side of human nature, when he said, † *We learn fables and absurditys*

I 5

from

* *Ubi magis à sacerdotibus quam inter aras & delubra conducuntur stupra, tractantur lenocinia, adulteria meditantur? Frequentius denique in aditumorum cellulis, quam in ipsis lupanaribus flagrans libido defungitur. Et tamen ante eos, diu regna tenuerunt, Assyrii, Medi, Persæ, Græci etiam, & Egyptii, cum Pontifices & Arvales, & Salios, & Vestales, & Augures non haberent. Ibid. p. 238.*

† *Fabulas & errores ab imperitis parentibus discimus & quod est gravius, ipsi studiis & disciplinis elaboramus. p. 203.*

from our ignorant ancestors; and what is more intolerable, we employ our learning and studys to make sense of them.

(16.) SYNESIUS, a celebrated African Bishop of the fifth century, and a great Philosopher, had, like ORIGEN and MINUTIUS FELIX, too much learning and too little zeal to be call'd *saint*; and was so uprightly sincere, that he would not accept of his Bishoprick but on the following *free-thinking* terms, as he expresses himself: * *To shake those doctrines,* says he,

* Καλεπόν ἐσιν, εἰ μὴ καὶ λίαν ἀδύνατον, εἰς ψυχὴν τὰ δι' ἐπισήμης εἰς ἀπόδειξιν ἐλθόντα δόγματα σαλευθῆναι. οἶσθα δ' ὅτι πολλὰ φιλοσοφία τοῖς θρυλλημένοις τέτοις ἀντιδιατάττεται δόγμασιν. ἀμέλει τῇ ψυχὴν ἐκ ἀξιώσω ποτὲ σώματι ὑσερογενῇ νομίζειν τόν κόσμον ἔ φήσω καὶ τὰλλα μέρη συνδιαφθείρεσθαι. τὴν καθωμιλημένην ἀνάσασιν ἱερὸν τι καὶ ἀπόρρητον ἡγήμαι, καὶ πολλὰ δέω ταῖς τῷ πληθὺς ὑπολήψεσιν ὁμολογεῖσθαι. νῦν μὲν ἔν φιλόσοφοι ἐπόπτης ὡς τὰληθῆς, συγχωρεῖ τῇ χρεῖα τῶν ψεύδεσθαι. ἀνάλογον γὰρ ἐστὶ φῶς πρὸς ἀλήθειαν, καὶ ὄμμα πρὸς δῆμον. ἢ ἔν ὀφθαλμοῖς εἰς κακὸν ἀν' ἀπολαύσειε, φῶς, καὶ ἢ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς τὸ σκότος ὠφελιμώτερον. ταύτη καὶ τὸ ψεύδος ὀφελος εἶναι τιθεμαι δήμῳ, καὶ βλαβερόν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῖς ἐκ ἰσχύος ἐνατενίσαι πρὸς τῶν ὄντων ἐνάργειαν. εἰ ταῦτα καὶ οἱ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς

he, that are demonstrated, is difficult, or rather impossible. And you know that Philosophy is inconsistent with the receiv'd opinions. I cannot grant the soul to be of later original than the body. I shall not say that the universe and its parts will perish together. The commonly receiv'd story of the resurrection contains something sacred and not fit to be divulg'd, and I am far from acknowledging the common opinions concerning it. Indeed, a philosophical mind, tho a proper judg of truth, yields to the necessity of disguising. For as light is to the sight, so is truth to the common people. Whereas therefore the sight without hurt cannot enjoy immoderate light, and darkness is better for infirm eyes: so I affirm disguise is more useful to the vulgar, and truth hurts those who cannot look into the evidence of things. If therefore the

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ἡμᾶς ἱερωσύνης συλχωρέσιν ἔμοι νόμοι, δυναίμην ἂν ἱεραῶσθαι, τὰ μὲν οἰκοι φιλοσοφῶν, τὰ δ' ἔξω φιλομουθῶν, εἰ μὴ διδάσκων, ἀλλ' ἐδὲ μὲν τοι μελαδιδάσκων, μένειν δὲ εἴω ἐπὶ τῆς προλήψεως. εἰ δὲ φασιν ἔττω δεῖν ἢ κινεῖσθαι, ἢ δῆμον εἶναι τὸν ἱερέα ταῖς δόξαις, ἔκ ἂν φθάνοιμι φανερόν ἐμαυτὸν ἅπασι καθιστᾶς. δῆμῳ γὰρ δὴ ἢ φιλοσοφία, τί πρὸς ἀλλήλω; τὴν μὲν ἀληθειαν τῶν θεῶν ἀπόρρητον εἶναι δεῖ. τὸ δὲ πληθὺ ἐτέρας ἔξεως δεῖται. αὐτοῖς δὲ ἢ πολλάκις εἰρῶ, μηδέμιᾶς ἀνάγκης παρούσης. ἔτ' ἐλέγχειν σοφόν, ἔτ' ἐλέγχεσθαι. καλέμεν δ' εἰς ἱερωσύνην, ἔκ ἀξιώ προσποιεῖσθαι δόγματα ταῦτα θεόν, ταῦτα ἀνθρώπου μαρτύρομαι.
Opera, p. 249.

laws of Episcopal consecration establish'd among us allow of this, I can submit to be consecrated; while I have the liberty to philosophize at home, and talk mysteriously to the people in publick, neither teaching them any thing thorowly, nor unteaching them any thing, but suffering them to continue in their preconceiv'd opinions. But if those laws suppose a Bishop should be so affected, and be like the common people in his opinions, I cannot avoid publickly discovering my self. For what relation has philosophy to the common people? The truth in divine things ought to be kept mysterious. But the people ought to be affected otherways. Again and again I will speak it, I think a wise man, without urgent necessity to the contrary, ought to leave others to their sentiments, and at the same time to retain his own. But if you make me a Bishop, I will not counterfeit my opinions. Of this I call God and man to witness. And he was made Bishop of Cyrene on these free-thinking terms.

But I must not conceal from you, that as they who elected him knew the mighty efficacy of a Bishoprick to convert, and therefore doubted not of his speedy orthodoxy; so * he did not fail them, but was soon enlighten'd in the point of the resurrection. For when † EVAGRIUS, a Heathen Philosopher, and his old friend, came to visit him upon his promotion, SYNESIUS took a great deal of pains to convert him; insomuch that the Philosopher declar'd himself convinc'd of the truth of the Christian Religion, and in particular of the resurrection. And the following parti-

* Photii Biblioth. Cod. 26.

† Dupin Bibl. Seicle. 5. prem. par. p. 845, 846. taken out of *Pratum Spirituale*.

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ticular is recorded in *ecclesiastical history*, as an evidence of the sincerity of them both, and likewise as an undoubted proof of the *resurrection* it self. The Philosopher, after he had receiv'd his baptism, came to SYNESIUS, and gave him a sum of mony to distribute among the poor, and requir'd a *note under his hand*, by which he should oblige himself to pay it him again in the other world. SYNESIUS made no scruple to give him such a *note*. The Philosopher kept the *note*, and some time before his death order'd his children to put it into his coffin with him. Three days after his death, he appear'd to SYNESIUS, and desir'd him to come to his tomb, and take up the *note* he had given him, because he had receiv'd his mony, and assur'd him he should find a *receipt* under his hand at the bottom of the *note*. SYNESIUS, who knew not that EVAGRIUS's children had put the note in their father's coffin, sent to them, and having found out the truth of the matter, and acquainted them with what had happen'd, went with the clergy and magistrates of *Cyrene* to the tomb, open'd the coffin, found the note, and a receipt under EVAGRIUS's hand. And as a proof of all this, the note and receipt were preserv'd in the *vestry* of the Episcopal Church of *Cyrene*.

(17.) My Lord BACON show'd himself to be a great *free-thinker*, not only by throwing off the old and introducing a new philosophy, but by several passages in his works relating directly to Religion. He explain'd the whole *secret of superstition*, when he said, * *That nature has planted*

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* *Natura rerum omnibus viventibus indidit metum & formidinem, vita atque essentia sua conservatricem, ac mala ingruentia vitantem & depellentem. Veruntamen eadem na-
tu-*

in every living thing a kind of care and fear for the preservation of its own life and being, and for the shunning and resisting of evils that may befall it : and yet this nature knows not how to keep a mean, but always intermixeth vain and empty fears ; so that all things (if their insides might be seen) are full of Panick fears : and above all, men and especially the vulgar, who are loaded and toss'd about with superstition (which is nothing else but Panick fear) especially in times of difficulty, danger, and adversity. And he commends this saying of EPICURUS as divine ,
 „ that wise men are not profane when they deny
 „ the Gods of the common people , but they
 „ are profane when they think the Gods are
 „ such as the common people believe in. *

He likewise shows his suspicion of the facts upon which most of the superstitions of the world are grounded, when he says, † *that whatever any way has the least relation to Religion, is particularly liable to suspicion ; as for instance , the strange storys and prodigys recorded by LIVY.*

Lastly, he saw clearly into the mischief of super-

tura modum tenere nescia est, sed timoribus salutaribus semper vanos & inanes admisceat ; adeo ut (si intus conspici darentur) omnia Panicis Terroribus plenissima sint : præsertim humana, & maxime omnium apud vulgum, qui superstitione [qua verè nihil aliud est nisi Panicus Terror] in immensum laborat & agitur, præcipue temporibus duris, & trepidis, & adversis. Augm. Scient. l. 2. c. 13.

* *Ut divine Epicurus locutus sit, Non deos vulgi negare profanum, sed vulgi opiniones diis applicare profanum Ibid.*

† *Maxime habenda sunt pro suspectis quæ quomodocunque dependent a religione, ut prodigia Livii. Nov. Org. l. 2. aph. 19.*

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perfection, when in his *Essay* upon that subject he prefer'd Atheism to it.

(18.) THOMAS HOBBS of Malmesbury, notwithstanding his several false opinions and his *High-Church* politicks, is a great instance of learning, virtue, and free-thinking. My Lord CLARENDON says, * *His Leviathan contains in it good learning of all kinds, politely extracted, and very wittily and cunningly digested in a very commendable method, and in a vigorous and pleasant stile... That among the excellent qualittys, parts, and facultys with which Mr. HOBBS is plentifully endow'd, his order and method, and his clear expressions, his conceptions in weighty, proper, and significant words, are very remarkable and commendable... That his whole book discovers a master-faculty in making hard things easy to be understood. But for his virtue, my Lord says, He is one of his oldest acquaintance, and of whom he has always had a great esteem, as a man who, besides his eminent parts of learning and knowledg, hath been always look'd on as a man of probity, and of a life free from scandal.*

(19.) The next instance I shall lay before you, shall be Archbishop TILLOTSON; whom all *English free-thinkers* own as their head, and whom even the enemys of *free-thinking* will allow to be a proper instance to my purpose. His learning and good sense are disputed by none. And for his virtue and *free-thinking*, I appeal to Dr. HICKES, who says, † *He caus'd several to turn Atheists, and ridicule the Priesthood and Religion; and who records him for the gravest Atheist*

* *Survey*, p. 2. 16. 21. 3.

† *Hickes's Disc. on Tillotson and Burnet*, p. 38, 40, 74.

Atheist that ever was. Where by a promoter of *Atheism* and contempt of the *priesthood*, and by *Atheist*, ought to be understood (considering whose language it is; and to whom it is apply'd) a man who did not take up his opinions upon the authority of any man, or encourage others to do so, that is, a *free-thinker*; and by *grave*, ought to be understood a man of *virtue and morals*. But his works are the noblest testimony. They, tho chiefly consisting of * *Sermons*, tend to the promoting of true Religion or virtue (in the practice whereof the peace and happiness of society consist) and *free-thinking*: and in them he has greatly exceeded the idea he us'd to give of the *goodness of a sermon*, by frequently repeating the words of a witty man, *that it was a good sermon which had no hurt in it.*

What a charming idea does he give us of the *Deity*? It is alone sufficient, without any further argument, to make the *Atheist* wish there were a *Deity*, and by silencing his prejudices dispose him to conviction. † *Did but men*, says he,

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* What is here said about *Sermons* may possibly give offence to all preachers of *Sermons*, and to some hearers: wherefore I humbly offer to their consideration the following passage of that wise and free-thinking Princess, *Queen Elizabeth*, taken out of her admirable proclamation to forbid preaching, printed in the appendix to *Strype's Annals*: viz. That since from preaching there riseth amongst the common sort of people not only unfruitful disputes in matters of Religion, but also contention, and occasion to break common quiet; her majesty hath for the quiet Governance of her subjects thought it necessary to charge and command all her subjects, as well clergy as laity, that they do forbear to preach or teach, or give audience to any manner of doctrine or preaching: her majesty desiring by all means possible to procure and restore virtue and godliness, with universal charity and concord, to this her realm.

† *Sermons*, vol. I. p. 69.

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consider the true notion of God, he would appear so lovely a being, and so full of goodness, and of all desirable perfections, that even those very persons who are of such irregular understandings as not to believe there is a God, yet could not refrain from wishing with all their hearts that there were one. For is it not really desirable to every man, that there should be such a being, as takes particular care of every one of us, and loves us, and delights to do us good; as understands all our wants, and is able and willing to relieve us in our greatest straits, when nothing else can? Is it not every man's interest, that there should be such a governour of the world, as really designs our happiness, and hath omitted nothing that is necessary to it; as would govern us for our advantage, and will require nothing of us but what is for our good, and yet will infinitely reward us for the doing of that which is best for our selves? And we have reason to believe God to be such a being, if he be at all.

What a Christianity, and how different from that of the imposers of creeds, ceremonies, and particular forms of ecclesiastical government, does he set before us? * *All the dutys, says he, of Christian Religion which respect God, are no other but what natural light prompts men to, excepting the two sacraments, and praying to God in the name and by the mediation of Christ. And even these things (which lay no obligation upon us, but as they are the pure positive commands of God) he justly observes, are of less moment than any of those parts of Religion which in their own nature tend to the happiness of human society.* † *For, says he, I think my self oblig'd*

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* *Ibid.* p. 169.

† *Six Sermons, &c.* p. 73.

to deal plainly, and to be so faithful to mothers, as to tell them that nursing their own children is a natural duty; and because it is so, of a more indispensable obligation than any positive precept of reveal'd Religion. And as he plainly saw, * that all sects are commonly most hot and furious for those things for which there is least reason: so whenever the belief of reveal'd religion was accompany'd with heat and fury, he scrupled not to say, † Better it were that there were no reveal'd Religion, and that human nature were left to the conduct of its own principles and inclinations, which are much more mild and merciful, much more for the peace and happiness of human society, than to be acted by a Religion which inspires men with so wild a fury.

Then ‡ in the interpretation of what God has reveal'd, he says we are to govern our selves by our natural notions; and that a miracle is not enough to give credit to a Prophet, who teacheth any thing contrary to our natural notions.

With respect to the meetings of priests in their Councils, Convocations, General Assemblies, Synods, and Presbyterys, his enemys record this *bon mot* of his, ** that he never knew any good to come from the meetings of priests. But his own words of the second General Council of Nice, more fully show his judgment of the authority of such bodys: †† that if a General Council of Atheists had met together with a design to abuse Religion, by talking ridiculously concerning it, they could not have done it more effectually. But nothing can
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† Vol. 3. p. 350. † 18. ‡ 73. 77.

** Letter to a convocation-Man, p. 8.

†† Rule of faith, p. 251.

exceed the freedom, courage, and honesty of what he says elsewhere; * that if all the great Mathematicians of all ages, ARCHIMEDES, and EUCLID, and APOLLONIUS, and DIOPHANTUS, &c. could be suppos'd to meet in a General Council, and should there declare in the most solemn manner, and give it under their hands and seals, that twice two did not make four, but five; this would not in the least move him to be of their mind.

Lastly, he not only asserts our right to think freely, but expresses his astonishment at our stupidity, for allowing it to be call'd in question. Says he, † Our best reason is short and imperfect: but since it is no better, we must make use of it as it is, and make the best of it. And he has often wonder'd that people can with patience endure to hear their teachers and guides talk against reason; and not only so, but they pay them a greater submission and veneration for it. One would think this but an odd way to gain authority over the minds of men; but some skilful and designing men have found by experience, that it is a very good way to recommend them to the ignorant, as nurses use to endear themselves to children by perpetual noise and nonsense.

I cannot close this account of free-thinkers better than with this excellent person; because no free-thinker will be disturb'd to share with him in the reproaches of Atheism, Libertinism, or any other groundless or sanctify'd calumnys; or be concern'd for his reputation among any, except those who have such a degree of understanding

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* Six Sermons, p. 13.

† Sermons, Since his Death, vol. I. p. 68. 69.

and *morality*, as to value a Person whose *Works* tend so much to the improvement of *those two things*, wherein alone consists the *perfection of man*.

I might in like manner have instanc'd in ERASMUS, Father PAUL, MONTAGNE, JOSEPH SCALIGER; CARTESIUS, GASSENDUS, GROTIUS, HOOKER, CHILLINGWORTH, Lord FALKLAND, Lord HERBERT of *Cherbury*, SELDEN, HALES, MILTON, WILKINS, MARSHAM, SPENCER, WHITCHCOT, CUDWORTH, MORE, Sir W. TEMPLE, SAMUEL JOHNSON, and LOCKE; but that I am afraid I have been already too tedious: and besides, they are all known for their penetration, virtue, and *free-thinking*, to those who apply themselves to the reading of the best modern authors, and even by fame to others. I will only add, that as I take it to be a difficult, if not impossible task, to name a man distinguish'd for his sense and virtue, and who has left any thing behind him to enable us to judg of him, who has not given us some proofs of his *free-thinking*, by departing from the opinions commonly receiv'd (as indeed every man of sense who thinks at all must do, unless it can be suppos'd possible, when opinions prevail by mere chance without any regard to reason, that reason and chance should produce the same effect;) so I look upon it as impossible to name an *enemy to free-thinking*, however dignify'd or distinguish'd, who has not been either crackbrain'd and enthusiastical, or guilty of the most diabolical vices, malice, ambition, inhumanity, and sticking at no means (tho ever so immoral) which he thought tended to God's glory and the good of the Church; or
has

has not left us some marks of his profound ignorance and brutality; or else aim'd to make his fortune by courting the *priests*, the Women, and the Mob.

Thus, Sir, I have endeavour'd to execute your commands, and give you free leave to make any use you please of what I have written, with this limitation, that if you think so well of it as to commit it to the press, you would conceal your name, and let it go abroad without the credit of your approbation: for I think it virtue enough, in a country so ignorant, stupid, superstitious, & destitute of all private & publick virtue as ours, to endeavour to do good, only within the bounds of doing your self no harm. I am

Yours, &c.

F I N I S.

